Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

UN/LOCODE Advisory Group
2023 meeting
Geneva, 11-12 May 2023
Item 9 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of decisions

Report of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Location (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group on its 2023 Meeting

Summary

The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group held its 2023 meeting on 11-12 May 2023 in Geneva. The secretariat prepared the conference report of the meeting.

The report provides a summary of the discussions held during the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group meeting and the decisions made by the Group. The outcome of this meeting will be presented to the UN/CEFACT Plenary for endorsement at its 29th session scheduled for 9-10 November 2023.

I. Introduction and attendance

1.   The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group held its 2023 meeting on 11-12 May 2023 in Geneva. The meeting was attended by 22 delegates and experts representing national government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. The following United Nations Member States were represented: Brazil, China, Japan and Denmark. The following United Nations bodies and organizations participated in the meeting: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector participated: the Bureau International des Containers (BIC), the International Organization of Standardization (ISO), the Ship Message Design Group (SMDG), the Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA), the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT), Hapag-Lloyd, EUROGATE, the Top TIER Associate, the K Consulting, the Josai International University (JIU), GEFEG, the Korea Internet & Security Agency (KISA), the CIF Consulting, the China National Institute of Standardization (CNIS) and the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT).

II. Opening remarks

2.   The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) opened the meeting by welcoming the representatives of the Group. She flagged the importance of UN/LOCODE for international trade, its economic impact, and its relevance to other aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She also emphasized the necessity of extending the Group's mandate to ensure continuity and of addressing the cyber security concerns flagged in the current UN/LOCODE system. Additionally, as Division Director, she expressed her commitment to

- Documenting and promoting the significance of UN/LOCODE.
- Ensuring that the secretariat should efficiently carry out the UN/LCOODE work with emerging technologies, inspired by the UN SDG Data Strategy.
- Mobilizing resources not only to keep UN/LOCODE going but also to make it modern with a top-notch and user-friendly interface.

3.   The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group echoed the remarks of the Director and complemented with two challenges concerning UN/LOCODE:

- Since the definition of location is changed from point to area in the revised Recommendation 16, the co-existence of UN/LOCODEs assigned to point and area locations might need a clean-up.
- In addition to the three child codes currently registered in the UNECE repository from BIC, SMDG and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), new child codes might need to be recognized to identify sub-locations.

She also stressed that the Group should request the UN/CEFACT Plenary to extend the Group's mandate for another two-year term with a new programme of work (2024-2025) approved at this meeting.

III. Procedural

4.   The agenda of the meeting was approved. (Decision 23-1)

IV.   Report from the secretariat

5.   The secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group reported on the activities since the 2022 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group as follows:

- Timely publication of UN/LOCODE releases 2021-1 and 2021-2
- Enhancement of the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network through new nominations from Chile and Egypt, along with the renomination from Sweden
- Collaboration with FAO on the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) and the Global Record
- Updates on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) FAL 47, highlighting UNECE's intervention to remove a recommendation of only using GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) for vessel-berth compatibility checks in the Guidelines on Operational Port Date
- Updates on the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, particularly its Task Force's review of the administration languages used in ISO 3166 and forthcoming proposal for a consistent approach
- Progress on the UN/CEFACT Project on the JSON-LD Web Vocabulary
- Ongoing UN/LOCODE maintenance activities involving the validation of Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team via regular virtual maintenance meetings
- Conducting two ad-hoc meetings of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Policy to develop draft recommendations for the Group's approval
- Efforts to address issues related to the current UN/LOCODE system and to explore potential long-term solutions
- Presentation of a draft Programme of Work for the period of 2024 to 2025 for approval and subsequent submission to the next UN/CEFACT Plenary

V.   Overview of new developments and follow-up

6.   On behalf of the representative of IMO, the Chair updated on the 47th session of the Facilitation Committee on the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business (FAL 47), covering facilitation instruments, Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS) and electronic business. It was highlighted that by 1 January 2024, a Maritime Single Window for data exchange will become mandatory in ports around the world. All IMO member states need to establish, maintain and utilize Maritime Single Windows for the electronic exchange of information. In this context, the use of UN/LOCODE will be expanded in the maritime sector.

7.   Considering a recommendation of only using GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) for vessel-berth compatibility checks in the guidelines for harmonized communication and electronic exchange of operational data for port calls, the secretariat intervened at FAL 47 to raise the concerns and request to remove or reword this recommendation. With the coordination of the IMO secretariat and the support from the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Group and other experts, the recommendation was removed from the final version of the guidelines.

8.   Delegates and participants expressed their appreciation for the collaborative approach and the team spirit showcased in resolving the matter concerning GS1 GLN and encouraged the UNECE secretariat to maintain coordination with the IMO secretariat through the UN/LOCODE Focal Point for IMO to address all matters related to UN/LOCODE in the maritime industry. (Decision 23-2)

9.   The Domain Coordinator of UN/CEFACT introduced the Geofence project initiated by BIC. BIC cooperated with SMDG to share data in their respective databases by using Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and established a Geofence Review Panel, drawing inspiration from the UN/LOCODE maintenance mechanism. He

highlighted that the forthcoming publication would offer valuable insights into the new UN/CEFACT project on the White Paper of Geofence standards.

10. Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to engage the UN/LOCODE business community in the new UN/CEFACT project on Geofence and report on its development at the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 23-3)

11. The representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) briefed on the progress of sustainable fisheries. The Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Working Group (GRWG) made a recommendation at its Sixth Meeting on 12 December 2022 regarding UN/LOCODE as an identifier for the port of registry of fishing vessels uploaded on the Global Record. GRWG welcomed the UNECE secretariat providing a process whereby ports not currently registered with a UN/LOCODE could be registered within six months of asking, and that new types or categories of ports could be added to the UN/LOCODE directory in the future if deemed necessary. GRWG also expressed concerns that these six months can be too long in some cases. The Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE) made a recommendation at its Third Meeting on 13-14 December 2022 concerning the use of the UN/LOCODE for identifying designated ports (DPs) under the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSAM). TWG-IE highlighted the importance of ensuring that all designated ports under the PSMA, have been attributed a UN/LOCODE, when possible. This recommendation was submitted to the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA (MOP4) held on 8-12 May 2023, in Bali, Indonesia.

12. Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to establish a task force, aiming to a solution to identify small fishery ports to meet the FAO demand as recommended by GRWG. (Decision 23-4)

13. Delegates and participants urged the UNECE secretariat to explore various resources to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system to allow a real-time data exchange by using APIs to avoid a six-month waiting time for UN/LOCODE releases. (Decision 23-5)

14. Delegates and participants encouraged the UNECE secretariat to conduct an official mapping on the list of DPs with corresponding UN/LOCODE, with the coordination of the FAO secretariat and the support of the UN/LOCODE National Focal Points (NFPs). (Decision 23-6)

15. Delegates and participants tasked the UNECE secretariat to prepare a guide on this mapping practice to facilitate the work done by the NFPs. (Decision 23-7)

16. The Chair of the ISO Technical Committee 154 (ISO/TC 154) presented an overview of the fast-track procedure to adopt a UN/CEFACT standard as an ISO standard, for example, a project under ISO/TC 154 to fast-track the UN/CEFACT Buy-Ship-Pay Reference Data Model as ISO 20197.

17. Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to establish a task force to study the feasibility to fast-track UN/LOCODE as an ISO standard and report on its findings at the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 23-8)

18. On behalf of the secretariat, the Domain Coordinator of UN/CEFACT presented the UN/CEFACT project on the JSON-LD Web Vocabulary and its potential benefits for UN/LOCODE. This new project aims to deliver the UN/CEFACT supply chain vocabulary published in JSON-LD, both human-readable and machine-readable, to support the international community in the development of interoperable APIs, Internet of Things (IoT) streams, and Verifiable Credentials. Additionally, it might be another channel to receive Data Maintenance Requests.

19. Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to follow up on the project to collect feedback on UN/LOCODE published in JSON-LD from the UN/LOCODE business community and report on it at the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 23-9)

VI.   UN/LOCODE maintenance

20.   The Convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team reported on the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests validation during the recent maintenance cycles. She overviewed the Team's work, difficulties and challenges. She also pointed out that the Team received queries about UNECE's possible intention to stop UN/LOCODE. It was triggered by the misinterpretation of the warning flag for the cyber security issues on the current UN/LOCODE system and was clarified by the secretariat several times.

21.   Delegates and participants expressed their gratitude to:

- The secretariat for their dedicated support and coordination
- The Convenor of the Maintenance Team for her excellent work
- UN/LOCODE Focal Points and experts who have contributed to the DMR validation
- DMR submitters who were present at the maintenance meetings to facilitate the DMR validation by justifying their requests

22.   The secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group reported on the last two ad-hoc meetings of the UN/LCOODE Maintenance Policy held on 29 June 2022 in a hybrid mode and on 13 April 2023 virtually. As the outcomes of the meetings, the recommendations were presented for the Group's approval.

23.   Delegates and participants agreed to adopt the following maintenance policies and best practices and encouraged the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to validate DMRs in line with them (Decision 23-10):

- The centre of a requested area should be located as representative geo-coordinates.
- Function "B" will not be reintroduced to Recommendation 16 and a location on the border will be specified in the way that "Border" is indicated in the column "Remarks".
- Transport cost is preferred not to be introduced as a new criterion to assign a new UN/LOCODE, but to be addressed case by case based on business practices.
- Special attention should be given to distinguishing Special Economic Zones from Exclusive Economic Zones, as well as understanding the difference between Function "A" and Function "6".
- Sub-locations within an area location, such as an airport or a port, may be assigned a separate UN/LOCODE if duly justified by the National Focal Point.
- In cases of duplications, only one entry will remain for the location. It will be cleaned up through Data Maintenance Request(s) with the criteria to retain: i). Created/modified earlier; ii). The last-three-character with more letters; iii). Status is starting with "A". NFPs are encouraged to manage the duplications.

24.   Delegates and participants took note of the methodology, outlined below, for addressing maintenance policy issues (Decision 23-11):

- The secretariat drafts a working document that encompasses all the issues raised recently.
- A volunteer, supported by expert volunteers, leads a discussion on each issue to propose potential solutions.
- The working document is deliberated during the ad-hoc meeting to reach an agreement on recommendations.
- The recommendations resulting from the ad-hoc meeting are then submitted for approval at the next annual meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.

Delegates and participants also expressed their appreciation to the experts who contributed to the working document for the last ad-hoc meeting.

25.   The representative of the UN/LOCODE NFP for Japan raised concerns about inconsistencies in the code list for Japan. He illustrated issues related to assigning UN/LOCODEs to sub-locations and multiple UN/LOCODEs to one same locations. He also mentioned a gap to reflect the revised Recommendation 16. and a role of the NFP.

26.   Delegates and participants took note of the significance of the review by the NFPs to improve the UN/LOCODE data quality and welcomed the initiatives and efforts by the NFPs to review the code list for their country. (Decision 23-12)

27.   The representative of the UN/LOCODE NFP for China presented the practice in China that a customs office in a requested location is regarded as a criterion to assign a new UN/LOCODE. He pointed out that UN/LOCODEs assigned to locations (areas) co-exist with legacy UN/LOCODEs assigned to sub-locations (points). In this context, an official child code might be a potential solution to identify sub-locations.

28.   Delegates and participants encouraged the NFPs to clarify the criteria and the level of the smallest administrative unit in the country that can be assigned a UN/LOCODE and requested the UNECE secretariat to include them in the guidelines on the UN/LOCODE maintenance published on the UNECE website. (Decision 23-13)

29.   Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to follow up on the further discussion on the proposed official child code and report at the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 23-14)

30.   Delegates and participants requested the UNECE secretariat to liaise with the IMO secretariat to understand better

- Whether it is enough to identify a location in international waters with an International Safety Management (ISM) Code.
- International practice to identify a Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO).

and report at the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group. (Decision 23-15)

31.   The representative of Hapag-Lloyd envisaged if UN/LOCODE were an official tag recognized on OpenStreetMap, the Geofence would be searchable with UN/LOCODE.

32.   The Chair of ISO/TC154 delivered a presentation comparing different location codes from ISO, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). In his opinion, currently, there is no ISO standard to serve as a physical positioning location code used in global supply chains like UN/LOCODE.

33.   Considering the limited resources available in the UNECE secretariat, delegates and participants urged to prioritize the assignments of the task forces mentioned above, and thus preferred to set up a single Task Force (TF) led by the Vice-Chair, with the support of the secretariat, to accomplish various tasks in an optimal order. Delegates and participants tasked the UNECE secretariat to prepare a Term of Reference (ToR) of the TF. (Decision 23-16).

VII.   Programme of work for 2024-2025

34.   The secretariat presented a draft programme of work (PoW) for the period (2024-2025) to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for approval.

35.   Delegates and participants requested the Chair to present it to the next UN/CEFACT Plenary for decision to extend the mandate of the Group with another term (2024-2025). (Decision 23-17)

VIII.   Future work and other business

36.   Delegates and participants discussed a possible date and place to hold the next annual meeting.

37.   Delegates and participants expressed their desire not to organize the annual meetings in conjunction with the UN/CEFACT Forum in the future and welcomed volunteer(s) to host the next meeting in a hybrid mode. (Decision 23-18)

IX.   Adoption of decisions and the report

38.   Delegates and participants agreed to decisions 1 to 18 and the draft report. (Decision 23-19)

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