Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
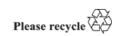
Twenty-fifth session
Geneva, 8-9 April 2019

Report of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) on its twenty-fifth session

I.   Attendance

1.   The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its twenty-fifth Plenary session in Geneva from 8 to 9 April 2019.

2.   The following countries were represented: Belarus, China, Eswatini, Finland, Georgia, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Tajikistan, Thailand, Ukraine. Representatives of the European Union were also present.

3.   The following United Nations organizations participated in the meeting: The World Trade Organization (WTO), The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre (ITC). The following non-governmental organization participated in the meeting: The Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT).

4.   The Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Economic Cooperation and Trade Division opened the meeting. She underlined the pertinence of Trade Facilitation to the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) and the benefits that it can bring. She highlighted the inclusive nature of UN/CEFACT and its engagement with other agencies to deliver trade facilitation and electronic business tools and emphasized its commitment to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She explained the results of the UN/CEFACT Forum of last week, which involved three hundred experts and three very well attended conferences. She concluded with some highlights of today's meeting.

5.   The UN/CEFACT Chair welcomed the delegates and underlined the pertinence of UN/CEFACT standards given the independent, robust and reliable nature of these deliverables. These standards support existing trading methods but can be easily adapted to

GE.19-06465(E)

support emerging technologies. The Chair explained how Reference Data Models (RDMs) are key semantic tools which package the work in order to facilitate the use of these technical standards. She highlighted some of the key aspects of the proposed Programme of Work for 2019-2020 including the two very high-profile recommendations: No. 33 on Single Window implementation and No. 16 on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE). She concluded with the importance of today's meeting and the pivotal role of the Heads of Delegation (HoDs) in UN/CEFACT development work.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)

6. The Secretariat informed the Plenary that the draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/1/Rev.1.

> **Plenary Decision 19-01**: The Plenary adopted the revised annotated provisional agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/1/Rev.1 with the proposed amendments.

III. Elections (Agenda Item 2)

7. Elections were held for the Regional Rapporteurs. The Secretariat announced that three Heads of Delegation had sent nominations for the position of Rapporteurs: Ms. Urachada Ketprom (Thailand) for the Asia-Pacific Region, Mr. Mor Talla Diop (Senegal) and Mr. Jalal Benhayoun (Morocco) for the Africa Region. The delegations of India, China and AFACT supported the candidature of Ms. Urachada Ketprom for the Asia-Pacific Region. The Secretariat asked the Plenary if they preferred to proceed with elections for the Africa Region or if they preferred to nominate both candidates, assigning them a part of the region. The delegation of India and Italy suggested the election both rapporteurs for Africa: Mr. Mor Talla Diop for Sub-Saharan Africa and Mr. Jalal Benhayoun for the Middle East and Northern Africa. The Plenary accepted this option. The Chair called for the nomination of a Latin American Rapporteur and expressed the wish that, in future, this part of the world would also be represented. Each of the elected candidates said a few words about their engagement within UN/CEFACT and their efforts to disseminate this work within their respective regions.

> **Plenary Decision 19-02**: The Plenary elected by acclamation Ms. Urachada Ketprom as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Asia-Pacific, Mr. Mor Talla Diop as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Sub-Saharan Africa and Mr. Jalal Benhayoun as the UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for the Middle East and Northern Africa.

IV. Matters arising since the twenty-fourth session (Agenda Item 3)

8. The Secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/3 on matters arising since the twenty-fourth session. The document underlines the collaboration which has taken place with multiple agencies over this past period. These include the following:

- Collaboration with UNCTAD during its E-Commerce Week initiatives in 2017 and 2018;

- Collaboration with all United Nations Regional Commissions for the bi-annual Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade;

- Collaboration with the European Union Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) in its Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF) initiative;

- Collaboration with the European Union Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) involving the work of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries;

- Collaboration with the European Union Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) in its work on Single Window implementation;

- Collaboration with the European Union Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) in their work on sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear sector;

- Collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Commission in a series of workshops to train trade agencies in supply chain management, simplification of import and export procedures and the implementation of National Trade Facilitation Committees – notably in Central Asia; and

- Collaboration with the signatories of the Electronic Business Memorandum of Understanding (ebMoU) which includes the International Standards Organization (ISO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

9.   The document also stresses the role of UN/CEFACT and its Policy Recommendations, standards and tools in the implementation of the WTO TFA. The Secretariat is an active member of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility which brings together supporting agencies, donors and States Members. The Secretariat is also active in the meetings of the Annex D+ organizations identified in the WTO TFA.

10.   The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been a particular focus of the work of all United Nations agencies since its implementation in January 2016. The Secretariat has provided extensive input into the Regional Sustainable Development Forum and the High-Level Political Forum, particularly on the themes of blockchain technology and of transparency/traceability in the textiles and fisheries industries. This has been done in partnership with organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Dutch Blockchain Coalition, the Government of Slovenia, the ITC, and the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO).

11.   The Secretariat reported on the evolution of the United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG), which has been further opened to other organizations and enhanced to include new itineraries.

12.   The work of the Regional Advisor was also reported. He supported UNECE Member States to implement the WTO TFA, notably, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Western Balkans countries. He organized several events, some in cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Commission. Under the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA) he organized the twelfth meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Trade in Almaty, Kazakhstan in September 2018.

13.   Following the previous Plenary, the UN/CEFACT Chair and the Secretariat presented the UN/CEFACT work to the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) and to the UN/CEFACT Contact Group. The EXCOM approved the Programme of Work of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries (ECE/EX/2018/L.8) and the extrabudgetary project

"Enhancing transparency and traceability for more sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear sector", financed by the European Commission.

14.   The delegate of Tajikistan thanked the Secretariat for its support in connection with the ongoing UNECE capacity building project in that country and, in particular, for its support in the establishment of the National Trade Facilitation Committee; the preparation of the Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade; and the development of the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for Exports Diversification, all of which are important tools to advance trade facilitation reforms in that country. The delegate underlined the work the country has undertaken in connection with the implementation of the WTO TFA and the instrumental role that this agreement plays in enhancing trade, especially in land-locked countries. Tajikistan established its National Trade Facilitation Committee two years ago and has already proposed multiple new regulations to facilitate the trading environment and efforts to modernize procedures.

15.   The delegate of the Russian Federation expressed its satisfaction with the work done by the UNECE Secretariat as well as the training provided jointly by the UNECE, UNCTAD and the ITC. He especially appreciated the work done on Single Window implementation and electronic business. He asked if the UNECE was planning to work together with UNCTAD to prepare a glossary containing terms used to identify international electronical trade terms. The Secretariat informed the delegates that it was updating the UNECE multilingual glossary of trade facilitation terms (adding the Chinese translation prepared with the support of the Chinese delegation) and that it would investigate the possibility of including electronic business terms in this Glossary, provided that the necessary extrabudgetary funds would be available. The Bureau explained that UN/CEFACT has been working with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to align their definition of eCommerce.

> **Plenary Decision 19-03**: The Plenary took note of the report on matters arising and requested that the Secretariat report on matters arising at the next plenary session in 2020.

V. Bureau overview of developments (Agenda Item 4)

16.   The Bureau reported on its new structure since May 2018, involving the nomination of three new Domain Coordinators and the departure of two Domain Coordinators. It reported having had twenty regular Bureau conference calls and that sixty Bureau decisions had been made. It explained that it has decided on a clear working definition of eCommerce for all UN/CEFACT work and has decided to concentrate on semantics and not ontologies. UN/CEFACT was represented at 85 events. There were 441 news stories identified by the United Nations Communication Unit concerning UN/CEFACT directly.

17.   The Vice Chair in charge of the International Trade Procedures Programme Development Area (PDA) reported on the progress of the recommendation projects including the finalization of Recommendation No. 37 on Single Submission Portals (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/6); the revision of Recommendation 33 on Single Window implementation; and the future recommendation on Core Principles for the Operation of a Single Window. She also reported on the progress of the White Paper project on Integrated Services for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in International Trade which aims to assist MSMEs to access international trading markets. Finally, she announced the launch of a new recommendation project in cooperation with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on readiness for emergency relief importation.

18.   The Vice Chair in charge of the International Supply Chain PDA reported on the new PDA, the pertinence of the deliverables of UN/CEFACT and the potential of new means to disseminate the work. He announced the finalization of Recommendation 43 on Sustainable Procurement (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/7) and the White Paper on Smart Containers (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/10). He also reported on the progress of various projects including the Buy-Ship-Pay Reference Data Model, the Accounting and Audit Reference Data Model, the Pipeline Data Carrier, the International Maritime Organization Convention of Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic electronic compendium mappings (eIMO-FAL), the revision of Recommendation 16, the Cross-Industry Delivery, the Cross-Industry Supply Chain Track and Trace and the Purchase Order Financing Request. He congratulated the working teams on their high-quality work and communication.

19.   The Vice Chair in charge of the Regulatory PDA reported on the progress of the blockchain project and the three documents which are being presented to the Plenary (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/8, ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/9, and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.3). He announced the launch of a new project on blockchain inter-ledger interoperability for the exchange of Preferential Certificates of Origin as well as a new project on the Internet of Things for trade facilitation. The PDA experts are also studying other potential projects on eIdentity, authentication and mutual recognition for trade facilitation and are also engaged in exploring the use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing and 5G. The Vice Chair of the Regulatory PDA reported on the progress of the waste management and waste analysis project.

20.   The Vice Chair in charge of the Sectoral PDA reported on the finalization of the Green Paper on Sustainable Tourism – Experience Programs (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/11) and the eQuality certificate which should be published shortly. He also announced a new project on Sustainable leather and textile traceability and transparency; potential new projects following up on sustainable tourism; and a separate work on experience programs. He called on the delegations to respond quickly to requests for HoD support and to assist in bringing new experts into the projects.

21.   The Vice Chair in charge of the Methodology and Technology PDA reported on the publication of the libraries for UN/EDIFACT, the Core Component Library (CCL) and its corresponding schema. They also reported on an updated annex for Recommendation 28 on "Codes for Types of Means of Transport" and a Guide for code management use. He announced a new Guide, recently started, on message construction and reported on the progress of the Header-Envelope Document Exchange project. He also reported on the publication of the UN/LOCODE directories.

22.   The Secretariat reported on current extrabudgetary projects to support the implementation of the WTO TFA. These included two projects financed by the Russian Federation—the first to support Tajikistan and the second one Central Asia—to establish National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), streamline trade documents and to establish a Single Window. Another project, financed through the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) 11th Tranche, targets one country per subregion of the UNECE: Kazakhstan, Belarus, Georgia and North Macedonia. The Secretariat will develop material to help Member States to implement the WTO TFA. In addition, a major event is planned to support the implementation of NTFCs in cooperation with other United Nations Organizations, possibly later in the year.

Plenary Decision 19-04: The Plenary took note of the Bureau overview of recent developments and requested that the Bureau report on developments again in 2020.

VI. Reports of rapporteurs (Agenda Item 5)

23.   The Regional Rapporteur for Africa reported on the various events attended, of pertinence to UN/CEFACT, especially on Single Window implementation, National Trade Facilitation Committees and eCommerce. He also reported on the activities of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE) throughout the region and beyond on the same topics, but also on electronic Certificates of Origin (eCO), Transport Coordination and Regional Policymaking. Several projects are planned for the near future on trade portals, Single Windows for some Least Developed Countries in Africa, the extension to the eCO, and the mutual recognition of digital signature. A new guide by the AACE on Single Window implementation has been completed and is available on the website and an International Forum on Single Windows is planned for 25-26 April 2019 in Dakar.

24.   The Regional Rapporteur for the Asia-Pacific reported on the activities of the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT), including the progress of the Travel, Tourism and Leisure Working Group, cross-border eCommerce Working Group and the exchange of electronic Phytosanitary certificates based on the UN/CEFACT Export Certification (eCert) in the region. She reported on the progress of the regional Single Window project in the region of the Association of South Eastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the application of UNECE Single Window recommendations numbers 33, 34, and 36. She also reported on the initiatives of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (ESCAP), including the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and Pacific, the e-learning course for Business Process Analysis, and research on Paperless Trade and Trade Facilitation. She also announced the 37th AFACT midterm meeting 22-24 May 2019 in Thailand.

> **Plenary Decision 19-05**: The Plenary took note of the reports of the Rapporteurs for Africa and for Asia-Pacific and requested that reports be provided at the next Plenary session in 2020.

VII. Activities of other UNECE bodies and international organizations of interest to UN/CEFACT (Agenda Item 6)

25.   A presentation was provided on the UNECE approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a nexus approach. One of the main objectives is to facilitate the communication of the work produced by the UNECE and demonstrate the relation between the various deliverables. The Nexus that encompass a major part of the work of UN/CEFACT is "Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity". The Secretariat has taken an active role in this work and is currently coordinating it.

26.   Delegates were briefed on work relevant to UN/CEFACT done in UNECE under the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public Private Partnership (CICPPP) and the Inland Transport Committee. These representatives highlighted the good, ongoing cooperation with UN/CEFACT and mentioned potential areas for future collaboration.[1]

27.   The Secretary of the SCTCS presented the work of Working Party 7 on Agricultural Quality Standards, specifically on the Nexus on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. The labelling of agricultural products and the reduction of food loss and waste are key contributions to this Nexus as it is the project that has been done jointly with UN/CEFACT on eQuality certificates. The Secretary also presented the work of Working Party 6 on

---

[1] The presentations are available at: http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50615

Regulatory Cooperation and Standards Policies, which reflects the Nexus on Smart and Sustainable Cities. Market surveillance, cybersecurity and risk management are main contributions to this nexus. This Working Party has been working on standards for the SDGs as well as standards on gender equality. The Secretary of SCTCS also presented a series of Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade which have been carried out in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan.

28.   The Head of Unit within the Cooperation and Partnerships section explained the structure of the Economic Cooperation and Integration Subprogramme which has two Sections, one on Cooperation and Partnerships and a second on Innovative Policies Development. He underlined the synergies of their work with UN/CEFACT. For three years, the Cooperation and Partnerships section has been initiating projects to develop standards and Policy Recommendations and has adopted the same procedures as UN/CEFACT on this. He explained the collaboration between our sections over the past year on the consultation on the Sustainable Procurement Recommendation project as well as the preparation of an article co-authored by the two subprogrammes on standards and innovation. Forward looking, the Team of Specialists on Innovative Policies and Competitiveness has launched a Global e-Governance Innovation Report for which they would be happy to receive input from UN/CEFACT. The Head of Unit also made a call for the foundation of new Centres of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) soon.

29.   The Chief of Section of the Transport Facilitation and Economics Section within the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division reported on the successful cooperation with UN/CEFACT. He explained the importance of the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) and the work that has been undertaken to develop a UN/CEFACT eCMR standard that would support the Additional Protocol to the CMR Convention concerning the electronic Consignment Note (eCMR). Since the development and launching of the standards last year, three new Contracting Parties have signed the eCMR Additional Protocol. The Chief of Section also presented a joint project to create an electronic version of the Green Card to check the validity of insurance by means of electronic communication, and a joint project proposal to develop a new e-learning website for all transport conventions that would be linked to the TFIG. He also envisaged a possible cooperation on the eTIR development.

VIII.   Recommendations and standards (Agenda Item 7)

30.   The Chair provided a brief overview of the different recommendations and standards to be considered by the Plenary.

31.   The Chair presented UNECE Recommendation 37 on Single Submission Portals (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/6), submitted to the Plenary for approval. The Single Submission Portal Case Studies document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.2) was also presented to the Plenary for information. This type of trade facilitation mechanism allows private-sector traders to satisfy both business-to-business exchanges and business-to-government exchanges. She thanked the project leaders and project team for their hard work.

> **Plenary decision 19-06**: The Plenary approved UNECE Recommendation 37 on Single Submission Portals (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/6) and took note of the related Case Studies (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.2) in view of creating a repository of case studies in the future.

32.   The Chair presented UNECE Recommendation 43 on Sustainable Procurement (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/7), submitted to the Plenary for approval. This recommendation proposes social and environmental responsibility in relation to procurement

as equally important criteria as the economic criteria. It proposes a list of potential aspects to take into consideration. The Chair thanked the project leader and project team for their hard work.

> **Plenary decision 19-07**: The Plenary approved UNECE Recommendation 43 on Sustainable Procurement (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/7).

33.   The Chair announced that, since the last Plenary, and according to agreed procedures, the Secretariat had issued:

- versions D.18A and D.18B of UN/EDIFACT;

- releases 2018-1 and 2018-2 of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Directories;

- releases D.18A and D.18B of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library;

- releases D.18A and D.18B of the UN/CEFACT XML schema library;

- an update of the code list annex of Recommendation 28 on "Codes for Types of Means of Transport;"

- a Code Management User Guide; and,

- version 1.0 of the Multi-Modal Transport Reference Data Model Business Requirement Specification.

34.   The Secretariat provided a short presentation on the current status of work underway to revise the UN/CEFACT website, which involves reorganizing the deliverables with the implementor in mind. The new pages will enable visitors to find all deliverables related to an individual topic of interest such as UNECE Recommendation 33 or the Cross-Industry Invoice. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for this excellent initiative to support the promotion of our work. She expressed her appreciation for UN/CEFACT experts' work, especially for the Library Validation and Maintenance.

> **Plenary Decision 19-08**: The Plenary took note of the standards presented by the Chair and requested that they continue to be updated on a regular basis.

35.   The Chair presented the three deliverables from the blockchain project: the "White Paper overview of blockchain for trade" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/9), the "White Paper on technical application of blockchain to UN/CEFACT deliverables" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/8) as well as the informal document, presented for information, "Blockchain in Trade Facilitation: Sectoral challenges and examples" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.3). These deliverables aim to provide a base guidance on blockchain technology as a cornerstone to future work on the subject; it also examines the potential of this technology in various sectors of activity. The Chair thanked the project leader and project team for their hard work.

> **Plenary Decision 19-09**: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/8 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/9 and the Plenary looks forward to the finalization of the document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.3.

36.   The Chair presented the White Paper on real-time Smart Container data for supply chain excellence (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/10). This deliverable demonstrates the benefits and possible use cases of Internet-of-Things devices attached to containers and how these can be integrated into the global supply chain exchange of information. It is the first part of this project; the project team will also develop BRS and technical artefacts. The Chair thanked the project leader and project team for their hard work.

Plenary Decision 19-10: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/10.

37.   The Chair presented the Green Paper on Sustainable Tourism (Experience Programs) (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/11) as well as document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.4 containing relevant Use Cases. This deliverable demonstrates how experience programs in rural areas can help boost local economies, while remaining socially and ecologically responsible. The Chair thanked the project leader and project team for their hard work.

Plenary Decision 19-11: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/11 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.4 in view of creating a repository of case studies in the future.

38.   UN/CEFACT has continued to develop Executive Guides that aim to provide a brief, high-level description of the technical work of UN/CEFACT. Four guides were presented to the Plenary for noting: "Executive Guide on electronic version of IMO FAL" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/12); "Executive Guide on Reference Data Models" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/13); "Executive Guide on Electronic Commerce" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/14); "Executive Guide on streamlining formalities and documentary requirements" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/15). The Chair thanked the Secretariat and the project teams for putting these together.

Plenary Decision 19-12: The Plenary took note of documents ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/12, ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/13, ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/14 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/15 and supports the development of future Executive Guides.

39.   The Secretariat presented the Meeting Report of the Fifth UNECE International Conference on Single Windows which took place in Casablanca in November 2019 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/16). This event's focus was to show how a Single Window can help the competitiveness of economic operators and improve the national economy in general.

Plenary Decision 19-13: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/16

40.   The Secretariat presented three training modules prepared to train the public and private sectors in Kyrgyzstan on Supply chain management, Facilitation of Import and Export Procedures and Single Window implementation (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/17-19). It also presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/20 "Streamlining formalities and documentary procedures connected with importation, exportation and transit" that will be the first part of a series of training modules to help guide countries to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and to put in place trade facilitation measures in general.

41.   The delegations of Germany and Ukraine expressed appreciation for the dissemination of the work of UN/CEFACT, especially that of ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/20. Regarding ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/17-19, they

invited the Secretariat to revise the draft training material in order to focus more on UN/CEFACT deliverables. The Secretariat explained that the training material was developed to share all relevant tools available on the subject and stressed that it is a draft document which will continue to be developed, subject to availability of funds, in view of other possible training in the region.

> **Plenary Decision 19-14**: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/20 and looks forward to a revised version of the material in ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/17-19.

IX. UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures (Agenda Item 8)

42. The Bureau prepared a new Programme of Work for the period 2019-2020 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/21). The Chair underlined that this document was prepared in consultation with all UN/CEFACT experts and is based, like the previous one, on the UN/CEFACT Strategy Document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1) It plans to continue the core activities of UN/CEFACT and has been enhanced to evolve with new technologies.

43. The delegation of Ukraine enquired on the expected release of the next version of the UNECE multilingual glossary. The Secretariat informed the delegates that the revision work has just started and will hopefully finish soon. The Chinese delegation has very graciously offered to help with a Chinese version of this glossary and thanked the Ukrainian delegation for its support with the Russian version.

44. The delegate of Singapore recognized the importance of the development of standards for cross-border trade. Singapore is interested and willing to jointly work on a reference implementation with Australia on the "Cross Border Inter-Ledger Exchange for Preferential Certificate of Origin using Blockchain" project within UN/CEFACT.

> **Plenary Decision 19-15**: The Plenary approved the Programme of Work for the period 2019-2020, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/21 and document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/21/ADD.1.

45. At the request of the user community, a "Mandate and Terms of Reference for an Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies in Trade and Logistics" was prepared (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/22/Rev.1) and presented for approval to the Plenary. The aim of this Advisory Group is to monitor business needs related to new technologies and to provide advice and expertise on implementation requirements and challenges.

46. The delegate of the Netherlands requested that the Secretariat clarify how the work of the Advisory Groups (AGs) and Teams of Specialists (ToSs) relates to the Plenary and to the regular work of UN/CEFACT. The delegate of Germany also requested explanations regarding the handling of projects, the availability of external funding for these groups and the liaison between these groups and other organizations. The Secretariat referred to the UNECE Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of ToSs and similar groups within UNECE (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1) and recalled that according to these Guidelines, these groups report directly to their parent body, which in this case is the UN/CEFACT Plenary. The Secretariat further explained that the mandate of these groups is laid down in their ToRs and in the case of the AG and ToS under the UN/CEFACT Plenary, there is no mention of managing projects, as eventual projects proposals would need to be brought to the UN/CEFACT Plenary Bureau and would follow the project development procedures. In addition, it was explained that United Nations intergovernmental bodies in general don't

manage funds, and this kind of work is done on a voluntary basis. The Secretariat also confirmed that in line with the EXCOM Guidelines, these groups shall work in liaison with other relevant organizations.

> **Plenary Decision 19-16**: The Plenary approved the Mandate and Terms of Reference for the creation of a new Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies in Trade and Logistics, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/22/Rev1.

X.   Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) (Agenda Item 9)

47.   The Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group presented the work of the group over the past period, as presented in the document "Overview of activities related to the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/24) as well as the report from the second annual meeting (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/23). She underlined the work which was done on capacity building on the use of UN/LOCODE, the state of the revision of Recommendation 16 as well as the importance of the Data Maintenance Request procedure and the need to re-engineer the UN/LOCODE system to support the work of the Secretariat. On this final point, she thanked the Chinese delegation for graciously offering to help with this reengineering.

> **Plenary Decision 19-17**: The Plenary took note of documents ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/23 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/24.

48.   The Chair of this Advisory Group also requested a revision of the Mandate and Terms of Reference of this group (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/17/Rev.1) and that the mandate be renewed for another two-year period. The Chair requested Plenary members to appoint National Focal Points for those countries who have not yet done so.

> **Plenary Decision 19-18**: The Plenary approved the revised Mandate and Terms of Reference of this group (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/17/Rev.1) and renewed its mandate for another two-year period.

XI.   Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries (Agenda Item 10)

49.   The Chair of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries (ToSSF) presented the work of the group over the past period, as presented in the document "Report on activities of the ToSSF since the twenty-fourth UN/CEFACT plenary" (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/25) as well as the report from the second session of the ToSSF (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.5). The Chair recalled that the purpose of the Team is to promote the use of the UNECE standard Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (UN/FLUX) and other standards in support of sustainable fisheries and to provide advice on its implementation. He also mentioned the increasing uptake of UN/FLUX in Fisheries Management Organizations and countries around the world, and that the recent implementation by the North Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) required an update on the standard, which was developed in a UN/CEFACT project with UN/CEFACT Core Components Library (CCL) experts. He also emphasized the input of the Team to the ongoing negotiations of fisheries subsidies at the WTO, the current work of the ToSSF on how UN/FLUX can support the exchange of certificates in the supply chain (including on compliance with labour standards) and the contribution of the Team to key events during the last year such as the United Nations Ocean Conference on the trade-related aspects of

SDG 14 (jointly organized by UNCTAD, UNECE, FAO and UNEP). He finally mentioned the support of the European Commission DG Mare to produce communication materials for the dissemination of the standard.

> **Plenary Decision 19-19**: The Plenary took note of documents ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/25 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/INF.5.

50.   The Chair of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries requested a revision of the Mandate and Terms of Reference of this group (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/16/Rev.1) and that the mandate be renewed for another two-year period. Italy praised the work of the ToS and its important role in the achievement of SDG 14 and expressed their support in the extension of its mandate. The European Union also expressed support in the extension of the mandate of the ToS and referred to the key role played by the European Commission experts in the development of the standard within UN/CEFACT. It was recalled that the use of the standard has been made compulsory in European Union Member States, and NEAFC is working on the use of the standard by its contracting parties (including, Denmark, Iceland, the Russian Federation, Norway besides the European Union). The FAO is also implementing it in the Global Registry of Vessels, and several countries in other regions of the world (e.g. Thailand) and regional fisheries management organizations are considering using it. The European Union recalled that UN/FLUX is the only global standard for managing fishing stocks and mentioned their support for the development of communication material to promote the use of the standard.

> **Plenary Decision 19-20**: The Plenary approved the revised Mandate and Terms of Reference of this group (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/16/Rev.2) and renewed its mandate for another two-year period.

XII.   Future challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business (Agenda Item 11)

51.   Speakers from UNCTAD, the ITC and the WTO had an opportunity to provide their perspectives on the future challenges of trade facilitation and electronic business.

52.   The WTO presented the current progress of WTO member States in the implementation of the TFA and emphasized the important role that UN/CEFACT plays in the implementation of key measures, such as the establishment and operation of NTFCs, and the development and implementation of international electronic standards for trade facilitation. The WTO also referred to the UNECE role in the Annex D+ group of organizations supporting the coordination of capacity building and technical assistance for the implementation of the WTO TFA. Finally, the United Nations Regional Commissions' Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade, presented at the last WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017, was mentioned as an important tool to benchmark countries' performance in sustainable and digital trade facilitation.

53.   UNCTAD also referred to the excellent cooperation with UNECE and UN/CEFACT, including the performance of trade facilitation needs assessments in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine, and in connection with the implementation of the UNCTAD empowerment programme for NTFCs. The UNECE Guidelines for the development of the National Trade Facilitation Roadmaps have been extensively used by UNCTAD and the World Bank, to develop such roadmaps in more than 20 countries around the world. Finally, priority areas for future joint work were mentioned and include support for the effective operation of NTFCs, the implementation of trade facilitation measures beyond the WTO TFA and work on the regional dimension of trade facilitation.

54.   The ITC helps businesses through capacity building and technical cooperation. The work that the ITC has undertaken to support trade facilitation (such as supporting pre-arrival processing, designing blueprints for integrated risk management and building the capacity of national border authorities) was explained. The ITC recognized the need to use innovative electronic solutions for trade facilitation. the UNECE-UNESCAP Business Process Analysis guidelines have been used quite extensively. Examples were provided of collaboration, including the joint publication of training modules for businesses and the update of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG). For the TFIG, the ITC has supported the development of an itinerary on the WTO TFA as well as an itinerary on SMEs and Trade Facilitation. The ITC has been working together with UNECE and UNCTAD in developing Technical Notes on Trade Facilitation.

55.   The Secretariat presented the updates to the Trade Facilitation and Implementation Guide (TFIG) which was done in cooperation with the ITC, and in consultation with other key organizations working on trade facilitation, such as UNCTAD, WCO, WTO and UNESCAP. This included updated content on the WTO TFA and two new itineraries. It also presented its work on the Regional and Global Surveys on Trade Facilitation which is being undertaken in cooperation with the other regional commissions, and the new online platform for dynamic assessment of countries performance in the implementation of measures for sustainable and digital trade facilitation. It requested that all UN/CEFACT delegations consider completing the survey and submitting it to the appropriate Focal Point for their region.

56.   The delegation of Senegal stressed the need for donor coordination, especially concerning how Single Window implementation is approached in the African region. They also raised the issue of the legal acceptance of electronic documents from one country to another and enquired whether there was any work being undertaken in this area. UNCTAD responded that the variation of Single Window implementations is a challenge that they often face given the number of different interpretations and service providers; they also coordinate donor meetings in order to take joint actions. The ITC responded that they are first reviewing the national legal and regulatory frameworks for the electronic exchange of certificates and then considering the phase two of mutual recognition which has not yet been started. UN/CEFACT reminded the delegates that it worked on a White Paper on Trusted Transboundary Environment which may lead to a future project on a framework for intergovernmental, technology-neutral mutual recognition and a recently launched project on electronic preferential Certificate of Origin.

57.   Following up on Plenary Decision 18-25, the Secretariat has continued its work on advancing transparency and traceability for sustainable value chains in the garment and footwear domain in support of SDG 12. It presented its findings in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/26, which was based on an extensive survey that had been given to the business sector. The purpose of this survey was to gain views on the challenges and opportunities in connection with this work, to determine priorities for the development a robust system that can enhance visibility of the value chain in this complex industry, and to enhance sustainable production and consumption patterns in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

58.   Semantics is one of the key aspects of electronic exchanges of information and it forms one of the core aspects of UN/CEFACT work. The Secretariat presented a report on the importance of semantics and its relation to syntax exchanges and how this potentially supports the implementation of the WTO TFA as well as SDG 17 of the United Nations 2030 agenda in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/27.

> **Plenary Decision 19-21**: The Plenary took note of document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/26 and document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/27 and requests that the Secretariat prepare similar reports for future Plenaries.

XIII.   Other business (Agenda Item 12)

59.   The delegation of Thailand invited all participants to the AFACT meeting in Bangkok on 22-24 May 2019. It will cover the regular midterm meeting, concentrating on the 2019 eAsia awards. This meeting will also host several individual Working Groups such as Travel, Tourism and Leisure; Methodology and Technology. They will also be looking at ePhyto and eCertificate projects.

60.   The UNECE and UN/CEFACT thanked the delegation of China for the warm welcome and support for the Hangzhou Forum in October 2018. The delegation of China was pleased to host a very successful event and appreciated the guideline from the Secretariat on the conduct during UN/CEFACT activities. They also invited UN/CEFACT to organize another event in Xiamen, China toward the end of the year 2019, possibly on UN/LOCODE and/or UN/CEFACT standards around eCommerce.

61.   The delegation of India reminded participants that UN/ESCAP has launched a framework agreement on cross-border paperless trade which will come into force once five member countries have ratified the agreement. This has been signed, pending ratification, by China, Cambodia, Iran, Armenia and accession by Azerbaijan. The delegation underlined that this framework agreement will be very important for cross-border electronic data exchange addressing mutual recognition. They encouraged collaboration with all regional commissions on this initiative.

62.   The delegation of Senegal reported on a project by AACE to create a platform for electronic documentary exchange to boost intra-Africa trade and expressed appreciation for the presentation on semantics by the Secretariat in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/27, which needs to be taken into consideration in the project.

XIV.   Adoption of decisions and draft report of the twenty-fifth session (Agenda Item 12)

> **Plenary Decision 19-22**: The Plenary adopted the decisions made at the twenty-fifth session and adopted this report ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/2.