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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

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**REPORT ON THE PROJECT OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
PROVIDED BY THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND UNECE  
IN THE AREA OF TRADE FACILITATION**

Submitted by the secretariat\*

Document for Information

\* The secretariat together with the Czech delegation are reporting to the Plenary on the latest phase of the project on "Support to Trade Facilitation Measures and UN/EDIFACT Implementation in Selected Eastern European Countries". The Government of the Czech Republic has funded the technical cooperation project as part of its Plan for Bilateral Development Assistance since 1997. The Ministry of Industry of Trade of the Czech Republic and UNECE have proposed to extend the project till 2005.

The joint UNECE/Czech Republic technical assistance project "Support of Trade Facilitation Measures and UN/EDIFACT Implementation in Selected Eastern European Countries" has been implemented since 1997 with the UN/CEFACT Plenary being regularly informed about its activities and results.

The main purpose of the project is to help the beneficiary countries by:

- Bringing together representatives of relevant government authorities and institutions and the business sector in order to raise awareness among them about trade facilitation and e-business and to create an understanding of the need for cooperation that is required for the implementation of trade facilitation and e-business related measures;
- Setting up national trade facilitation bodies or mechanisms for the coordination of trade facilitation efforts in the country (in accordance with UN/CEFACT Recommendation No. 4);
- Contributing to the implementation of trade facilitation measures in beneficiary countries, among other methods, by acquainting beneficiaries with practical examples of implementation in the Czech Republic, other beneficiary countries or elsewhere.

The first round of beneficiary countries included Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. Cooperation with partners in the Baltic countries did not go too much in-depth because of the constraints that counterparts faced in their respective national settings. Both of them, however, indicated a willingness to resume their participation if the conditions permit. The best results have been achieved in Ukraine and Belarus. Consequently, the experts from these countries have been able, along with those from UNECE and the Czech Republic, to contribute to the project's activities in beneficiary countries that joined the project later, such as Moldova, Uzbekistan and, in a future perspective, also other Central Asia or Caucasus countries.

The main activities undertaken by the project in the year 2003 were as follows:

- Seminar on trade facilitation and electronic business in Uzbekistan (Tashkent, February 2003), with speakers from UNECE/UNCTAD, Czech Republic and Ukraine;
- Training workshop in connection with the UN/CEFACT Plenary (Geneva, May 2003), with the participation of representatives of UNECE, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan;
- Study stay for Ukrainian experts with focus on transport issues and the legislative framework for e-commerce/e-government (Prague, July 2003);
- Study stay for Uzbek specialists with focus on the Czech experience in the area of customs and the legislative framework for e-commerce/e-government (Prague, August 2003);
- Contribution to the First National Information and Communication Technologies Summit of Uzbekistan (Tashkent, September 2003) through a UNECE/UNCTAD presentation of the project in the Plenary dedicated to donors and the Czech experience in the round-table on E-commerce, and participation in the deliberations of the conference;
- Participation in the Fifth International Conference "Transport&Logistics&Storing 2003" (Kiev, October 2003) and a subsequent round-table with speakers from the Czech Republic;

- Study stay for Uzbek specialists aimed to familiarize them with the Czech experience in the area of legal issues and services for trade facilitation for small and medium-sized enterprises (Prague, October 2003);
- Assistance and participation in the Fifth International Conference on Electronic Business in Eastern European and CIS Countries (Minsk, November 2003), with speakers from UNECE/UNCTAD, the Czech Republic and Ukraine;
- Seminar on trade facilitation and the Czech experience in the area of customs and international standards, with speakers from the Czech Republic and Moldova (Chisinau, December 2003);
- Study stay for a Belorussian expert aimed at familiarizing her with the operation of two electronic marketplaces in the Czech Republic and the experience of the Czech national trade facilitation body FITPRO (Prague, December 2003);
- Preparation of introductory project missions to Kazakhstan and Armenia.

**Conclusion:**

The beneficiaries express high appreciation of the contribution that the project makes to their own efforts in the area of trade facilitation and electronic business, and in particular the assistance provided by UNECE and the Czech Republic.

The government of the Czech Republic continues to be satisfied with the results of the project, which is also reflected in a constantly renewed commitment to allocate development assistance funding to the project's activities. In December 2003, a decision was already taken by the government to make available the necessary resources for the continuation of the project in the year 2004.

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