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**RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION
TO THE UN/CEFACT PLENARY IN MAY 2003**

Submitted by the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific Region *

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* The present Rapporteur's Report for Asia and the Pacific Region is presented to the Plenary for information.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The subject of Trade Facilitation (TF) and e-Business (eB) in the Asian and Pacific region is gaining considerable momentum. The Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT) has coordinated efforts with member countries and economies such as Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam for Trade Facilitation and e-Business in the region. The issues and the activities addressed by this institution and related developments have been integrated in this paper.

2.0 AFACT-LED DEVELOPMENTS

The 20th session of AFACT was held back to back with an Electronic Commerce and Trade Facilitation International Conference/Exhibition “EDICOM 2002”, at Kuala Lumpur, from 27 to 30 October 2001 and 31 October to 1 November 2002 respectively. This time, around 300 participants from Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam participated in the meeting. However Australia, China, Mongolia, and Philippines were unable to participate.

Joint meetings for various working groups were held on 28 and 29 October 2002. The Working Groups (WGs) discussed the methods of co-operation between member countries to promote/implement TF and eB solutions in respective sectors. The XML Working Group conducted a special one-day session called “ebXML day” on 29 October 2002 to promote ebXML in the region.

The Plenary was held on 30 October 2002 and the major issues discussed and resolutions passed are outlined below :

- All HODs to create parallel working groups and coordination among member nations for cross border initiatives;
- Mongolia’s application for AFACT Membership was approved by the plenary;
- The ebXML Asia Committee was accepted as an Associate Member of AFACT;
- The proposal for AFACT restructuring based on the new UN/CEFACT structure was discussed and members’ comments were requested by the end of March 2003. This would be compiled by the AFACT Secretariat for decision;
- The Plenary approved the Republic of Korea’s and Singapore’s candidatures as members of the Steering Committee (StC) of AFACT;
- All the Chairpersons of joint working groups presented their reports;
- The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia presented an update of the UN/CEFACT and AFACT activities as well as regional developments achieved during the year following the last AFACT meeting in Jakarta;
- The ESCAP representative presented his report and stressed the need for greater collaboration between AFACT and ESCAP;
- The AFACT secretariat presented a proposal on the eAsia award and expo on eAsia award winning programmes and other outstanding e-Business and Trade Facilitation programmes, which was accepted by the plenary;
- The Chair of the next meeting, Mr. Javed Akhtar, announced the venue and dates for the 21st AFACT meeting and EDICOM 2003, which would take place in Karachi, on 12 – 17 October 2003;
- It was agreed to hold the 22nd AFACT Plenary in Singapore and the 23rd AFACT Plenary in Vietnam.

The highlights of 20th AFACT session are as given below :

2.1 Web update and hyperlinking

The new web site of AFACT, *www.afact.org*, is linked to member web sites. It contains information related to Electronic Business (eB)/ Electronic Commerce (eC) Standard and Trade Facilitation (TF) issues/status, event calendar etc. All relevant meeting documents have also been hosted on the web.

2.2 Joint Working Group (JWG)

Some of the important issues which emerged from JWGs such as the Inter-Networking Implementation Committee, the XMLWG, the Awareness and Education WG, the Customs WG, the E-Commerce WG, the Financial WG, the Technical Assessment WG, the Transport WG, the Security WG, the Purchasing WG, the Air Transport WG and the Legal Working Group were:

- XML WG would coordinate with UN/CEFACT the ebXML initiative through the ebXML Asia Committee, which would provide a related forum and interoperability testing platform, since ebXML Asia was the associate member of AFACT;
- A handbook on EDI was being compiled by the WG and would be circulated to all members on completion;
- Member countries were encouraged to closely cooperate in order to develop a security framework and to exchange security information;
- Participating members recognized the need for joint studies on the methodologies adopted by member countries for eBusiness adoption in air cargo community;
- It was agreed that the Security WG (SWG) would make a recommended practice on PKI.

2.3 EDICOM 2002

The EDICOM 2002 conference was organized from 31 October to 1 November 2002. The EDICOM 2002 was inaugurated by Y. B. Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas, Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia. The focus of EDICOM 2002 was linking the value chain through e-business. The main topics discussed in the conference were: Supply chain management, E-Business incentives for SMEs, E-Business perspective (How can everybody benefit from e-business), Challenges in implementing e-business through XML/EDI over the Internet, Customs e-Solutions, Key for secure and efficient international trade, Harmonisation of laws, Global trends of e-business, Regional cooperation for e-business etc.

A large number of companies participated in the exhibition including Microsoft Malaysia (XML web services), Sun Microsystems Malaysia (Manufacturing, financial services, education etc.), GITN SDN BERHAD (integrated communication and computing infrastructure), Dagang Net (electronic trade communities in diverse sectors; from logistics and manufacturing to retail and government), KPMG Consulting, Mitech (information technology and asset management), Commerce Dot Com, MyEG Dot Com (electronic payment), Myspeed.Com (e-services) etc.

3.0 eASIA AWARDS

The AFACT secretariat has taken an initiative to start eAsia Awards. The eASIA Award campaign aims at promoting the mutual inspiration and experience sharing on electronic business and trade facilitation in Asian Pacific region. In addition, through this benignant competition activity, it is expected to:

- Promote the involvement of AFACT member Xstates in the international community;
- Drive the overall development of the information industry and eService industry;
- Accelerate the connection between domestic companies and their international partners;
- Improve competitiveness of domestic industries in the global market.

3.1 eAsia Award Objective

The objective of the award programme is:

- To reinforce AFACT's mission of promoting the application of UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations in the business, trade and administrative organizations, as well as cooperation among members;
- To highly promote electronic business and trade facilitation execution in the Asian Pacific region;
- To enhance the efficiency of information technology used in the business and public service environment.

4.0 UN/CEFACT AND ESCAP PARTICIPATION

The 20th AFACT plenary and EDICOM 2002 was attended by Mr. Ray Walker, UN/CEFACT Steering Group Chair, Mr. Kenji Itoh, UN/CEFACT Vice Chair, Mr. T. A. Khan, UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia and Mr. Will Keenan, ESCAP Regional Advisor on Trade Facilitation and Electronic Commerce.

5.0 OTHER INITIATIVES IN THE REGION

- The Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance (PAA) held its 11th Steering Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur for the first time from 20 to 21 February 2003. Hosted by alliance member Dagang Net Technologies Sdn Bhd (DNT), the meeting was attended by Tradelink, CrimsonLogic, CIECC, KTNET, Trade-Van, TEDI Club, DNT and the alliance's newest member, TEDMEV. Representatives from EDI Indonesia attended the meeting as observers. Members were informed that substantial progress have been made in the pilots for the PAA Secure Cross Border Transaction Service.
 - The GEPIR (Global EAN.UCC Party Information Register), an XML based registry, was operated by EAN member organizations. With the growing acceptance and usage of the service and to decide on future strategy, a (GEPIR) meeting was held on 20-21 January 2003 at New Delhi, India. Fifteen participants joined from all over the world including Switzerland, Turkey, Russia, France, Sweden, India, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Sweden, Iran. The agenda of the meeting included the finalization of version 3 of the specification draft, the preparation of the GEPIR business plan, whitepaper, connecting GEPIR to UDDI and a detailed discussion on overall architecture.
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