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DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

Report by the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia

This document is **for information**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the Asian region, the effort to implement electronic business continuously gains momentum. At the same time, there is noticeable progress in the development of awareness and efforts in support of trade facilitation. Major e-Business and trade facilitation promotion efforts are being continued by AFACT (the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business). However, the effort to implement electronic business standards and launch trade facilitation projects can now be easily identified in various regional and inter-regional forums as well as private sector led communities.

II. AFACT (Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business)

2. The 22nd AFACT Meeting and EDICOM Conference were held from 19 – 22 September 2004 in Singapore. The event was jointly hosted by Information Technology Standards Committee (ITSC) and the Singapore EDIFACT Committee (SEC). There were about 80 participants from 13 member countries and economies. Two associate members, ebXML Asia Committee and PAA (Pan Asian e-Commerce Alliance) were also present. The event consisted of a Steering Committee meeting, Joint Working Group meetings, a Plenary meeting and the EDICOM conference.

3. In the AFACT Plenary, held on 21 September 2004, the following decisions were made:

- Cambodia and the Pan Asian eCommerce Alliance (PAA) were accepted as a member and an associate member respectively. Consequently, there are 17 member countries and economies and two associate members in AFACT as of 2004.
- Among the members, there was a strong consensus on the need for close collaboration between AFACT and UN/CEFACT. The AFACT Plenary resolved to seek close cooperation with UN/CEFACT, starting at the 6th UN/CEFACT Forum scheduled for March 2005.
- The AFACT Plenary noted the progress report of the Business Collaboration Framework (BCF) Working Group, one of AFACT joint working groups (JWGs), regarding its project on modelling the Electronic Certificate of Origin based on the UN/CEFACT Modelling Methodology (UMM).
- Japan and Thailand were elected as elected Head of Delegation Steering Committee members
- The Plenary resolved to appoint Chinese Taipei as AFACT Secretariat for the second term (October 2005 – October 2009).
- Viet Nam will host the 23rd AFACT Meeting and EDICOM. The AFACT Steering Committee Mid-term meeting is scheduled for 9 and 10 May 2005 and the AFACT annual meeting and EDICOM are scheduled for 10 – 13 October 2005.
- The 24th AFACT Meeting and EDICOM will be hosted by Pakistan.

4. The annual EDICOM Conference was held on 22 September 2004 under the theme “Enabling Cross Border Trading”. In the Conference, various issues relevant to cross border trade were covered.

Among the presentation topics were: Standard data models, UN/CEFACT, ebXML Asia Committee, AFACT, RosettaNet, Web Services, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), and PAA.

5. The eAsia Award 2004, initiated by the AFACT Secretariat and supported by AFACT, took place on 24 September 2004 in Chinese Taipei. The eAsia Award event aims to promote electronic business and trade facilitation in the region. In the eAsia Award 2004, another award category was added – Bridging the Digital Divide. In the final campaign, out of total 24 candidates, 12 projects won the award (3 for each category). In addition to 4 category winners, there was one honorary award winner. The winners of the eAsia Awards 2004 are as follows:

- Trade Facilitation
 - PTP Community Systems (Malaysia)
 - eTrade: Facilitating International Trade in India (India)
 - Cert of Origin (Singapore)

- eBusiness in the Public Sector
 - Vitamin C (Cash): Supply Chain eFinancing Project (Chinese Taipei)
 - Electronic Bidding Core System (Japan)
 - eBAS: A Successful Government EIP (Enterprise Information Portal) (Chinese Taipei)

- eBusiness in the Private Sector
 - automate@hsbc (Malaysia)
 - Internet EDI Security System based on UN/CEFACT Recommendations (Japan)
 - Pioneering Semiconductor Value Chain Integration: TSMC-ASC eSupply Chain (Chinese Taipei)

- Bridging the Digital Divide
 - e-BAIRO Providing Equal Access to ICTs for Rural Communities (Malaysia)
 - eSuvidha (India)
 - Bridging the Digital Divide in an e-Era (Chinese Taipei)

- Honorary Award: Ms Siti Aminah Abdullah of Royal Malaysian Customs Department.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER FORUMS IN THE REGION

6. ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)

Under ASEAN, there is e-ASEAN Working Group (EAWG) on various electronic commerce issues. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia had an opportunity to introduce UN/CEFACT and AFACT to the e-ASEAN Working Group members at the special Consultative Session of the 18th e-ASEAN Working Group meeting held on 10 November 2004 in Cambodia. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur identified that paperless Trading was one of major activities of the e-ASEAN Working Group.

7. APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation)

Under APEC, an Electronic Commerce Steering Group (ECSG) deals with issues on electronic commerce. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia participated in the 11th ECSG and its sub-group meetings held on 22 – 25 February 2005 in Seoul. Through participation in the Meeting, the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia recognized that paperless trading is a major issue in the APEC ECSG.

Under ECSG, there is Paperless Trading Subgroup. The Paperless Trading Subgroup deals with the ECO (Electronic Certificate of Origin) pathfinder project, collaboration with PAA, etc. In addition, to establish a close collaborative channel between the public sector and the private sector on the issue of paperless trading, the APEC Public Private Partnership (PPP) Dialogue on Paperless Trading was established and its first meeting was held during the 11th ECSG Meeting.

8. ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting)

Under ASEM, there was the ASEM TFAP (Trade Facilitation Action Plan) eCommerce Meeting and Seminar. As the name TFAP indicates, trade facilitation is one of the core activities of ASEM. The 4th ASEM TFAP eCommerce meeting and Seminar were held on 21 – 23 February 2005 in London in the UK.

9. In the Seminar, there were two tracks related to trade facilitation - eLogistics and Paperless Trading. In the Paperless Trading track, several UN/CEFACT Plenary and Forum officers as well as the UN/CEFACT Secretariat made presentations on UN/CEFACT measures for trade facilitation.

10. The ASEM TFAP Meeting on eCommerce agreed that the development of interoperable universal standards is vital for the future development of eCommerce. Regarding the ASEM guidelines for Paperless Trading and eLogistics prepared by the Republic of Korea, the Meeting invited its members to submit their comments for further development.

11. ebXML Asia Committee

The ebXML Asia Committee is a regional body to promote the implementation of ebXML in the region. The Committee held its 12th Meeting on Oct. 25 – 29, 2004 in Seoul Korea. The Committee is composed of a Plenary, two task groups (Core Component and Interoperability) and one project on a Registry & Repository Federation (RRF).

12. The RRF is a joint project with Working Group 2 (Metadata) of the Subcommittee 32 on Data Management and Interchange (SC32) of the ISO/IEC Joint Technical Committee 1 to deal with the issue of data sharing and federation among ebXML registries. The ITG (Interoperability Task Group) works on an interoperability test for ebXML Messaging Service solutions and provide certificates to those solutions that pass the test. The ITG completed the 4th round test and certified 4 ITG members; it plans to launch the 5th Round Test in early 2005. The Core Component Task Group (CCTG) is

developing an ebXML Asia Committee Core Component Library. The 13th ebXML Asia Committee Meeting is scheduled on June 2005 in Hong Kong, SAR, China.

13. PAA and ASEAL

PAA is an industry-led alliance aimed at enabling secure and reliable cross-border transmission of trade- and logistic-related documents. PAA was established in July 2000 by three member economies of the Asian region. There are currently 9 member organizations from regional economies, which include the China International Electronic Commerce Centre (CIECC), TradeVan of Chinese Taipei, TradeLink of Hong Kong, SAR, China, the Trade Electronic Data Interchange (TEDI) of Japan, KTNET, an electronic trade service and solution provider in the Republic of Korea, TedMev of Macau, SAR, China, DagangNet of Malaysia and CrimsonLogic of Singapore. The current PAA projects include trade document exchange between Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei, Chinese Taipei and Malaysia, Singapore and Malaysia, Chinese Taipei and Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei and Japan and the Republic of Korea.

14. ASEAL (ASia Europe Alliance for paperless trade) is an industry-led and government-supported interregional effort for paperless trade. The effort was initiated in September 2004 in Cheju, Republic of Korea and had its second meeting on Apr.21 – 22, 2005 at Leeds Castle, the United Kingdom. There are currently four members (France, Germany, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom) and the membership will be expanded as the effort advances.

IV. CONCLUSION

15. There is significant amount of effort and a large number of activities going on in various regional and inter-regional forums and organizations for the implementation of eBusiness standards and trade facilitation in the Asian region. However, to a certain degree, there is a lack of concerted effort among the various entities. There also exists ample opportunity for UN/CEFACT to more effectively promote its trade facilitation recommendations and eBusiness standards through liaison and coordination with these forums and organizations in the region. Therefore, UN/CEFACT needs to seek close collaboration with various regional bodies in Asia whenever circumstances permit.
