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

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES: COUNTRIES

Draft Proposal by the UN/CEFACT Bureau

This document is one of three background documents for strategic discussions concerning UN/CEFACT stakeholder perspectives of countries, sectors and standards development organizations

Supporting documentation:

- TRADE/R.650/Rev.4 Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures for UN/CEFACT
- E/ECE/1434/Rev.1 Work Plan on ECE Reform
- ECE/TRADE/C/2006/3 Implementation of the UNECE Reform and Follow -up to the 2006 Session of the Commission
- ECE/TRADE/CEFACT/2006/10 Recommendations for approval: Consolidated Document Set
- Memorandum of Understanding between the International Electrotechnical Commission, the International Organization for Standardization, the International Telecommunications Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe concerning standardization in the field of electronic business
- Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP): Constitution and Operating Modalities
- Single Window Common Standards and Interoperability

I. Purpose

1. This background note has been prepared to support the first of three working sessions concerned with the importance of UN/CEFACT's activities from three perspectives: (1) countries, (2) sectors and (3) standards development organisations. It is provided as a draft and will be updated to reflect the exchange of views that takes place during this item on the agenda.
2. UN/CEFACT exists within the context of mandates articulated and approved by UN Member States (TRADE/R650/Rev 4). This session takes the opportunity to foster awareness-building about current and envisaged needs and aspirations from various parts of the stakeholder community of countries, with a view to fostering a sensible overall UN/CEFACT strategy and a timely work programme that can provide relevant products and services to its constituencies.¹
3. During the exchange of views involving Plenary members, the discussion is expected to focus on broad and specific ways in which the Centre's achievements to date are being used in their countries and ways in which they may be strengthened, particularly focusing on priorities for the near and medium-term.
4. A short list of topics appears at the end of this background note in order provide a starting point for input to the interactive session involving all Plenary participants.

II. UN/CEFACT'S Objectives and Work Programme related to Member States' interests

5. The following outlines UN/CEFACT work that may be of particular interest to Member States and then describes how countries might use these outputs:
 - (a) Standards and procedures for trade, business and government to business communications that meet the needs of both the private and public sectors and are created through coordination and cooperation between the two sectors
 - (b) Identified best practice for trade, business and government that take the above standards and procedures into account (for example through the development of business requirements specifications)
 - (c) Globally available and implemented electronic business standards that ensure interoperability at the level of data exchange between applications (and thus, between organizations) and take into account the needs of both private and public sector users. For ensuring adequate competition, availability and implementation, these standards need to be free and freely available

¹ The results of this session will serve as a contribution, together with those of the subsequent sessions, to the Plenary exchange of views about strategy and work programme that will begin to be taken up under Agenda item 6 (see supporting draft document "Towards an Integrated Strategy for UN/CEFACT").

(d) Assistance in implementing good practice in the area of trade procedures and e-business with trading partners and, especially, with neighbouring countries. This is of particular importance to landlocked countries and countries that would like to improve trade by developing expedited trade corridors along important trade routes, such as the proposed land corridor across the Russian Federation that would link them with China and China with Europe

(e) Implementation “packages” for standards that allow governments to more easily implement and promote good procedural and business standards and associated electronic implementations (e-government / e-business) within their countries and, especially, their administrations. Examples of such “packages” are the Single Window and UNeDocs.

(f) Assistance in promoting good practice in the areas of trade procedures and e-business domestically in their countries. This includes information, training, capacity building and policy guidance

(g) Specific tools for more ease of use in implementing trade standards, procedures and best practice, such as the PC toolkit for creating aligned documents

(h) An understandable overview of what all international organizations are doing in trade facilitation and how their individual responsibilities and capabilities “fit together” into a broader picture

6. In the end, countries want the above in order to be able to:

(a) Influence the development of the administrative and regulatory components of international trade in order to make them as cost effective as possible for their countries

(b) Identify opportunities for more competitive processes that facilitate international trade, be those requirements from international organizations or from large trading partner countries

(c) Identify the international standards and best practices, or “packages” (such as UNeDocs) that meet these international trade requirements

(d) Modify these international standards, best practices or “packages” so that they also meet national requirements (and without compromising their ability to meet international requirements)

(e) Implement them in an affordable way (affordable being very different for different countries) across a wide variety of users from government administrative offices to big multinationals to small and medium sized businesses and across all of the “media” required by this wide range of users including paper and software

(f) Know which international organization to address when they need information about, or assistance with, any of the above.

III. Some Topics for an Exchange of Views: A Starting Point

7. Plenary participants may wish to focus their attention on the following topics, or contribute others, aimed at providing input and validation about the perspective of countries on the importance of UN/CEFACT:

(a) UN/CEFACT's contribution to efforts by governments to act as an enabler of trade facilitation, through the development and enforcement of regulations that encourage technological innovation and support market demand through market-based mechanisms

(b) UN/CEFACT's contribution to the efficiency of national administrations, by bringing together common requirements and different standards efforts concerned with electronic business and trade facilitation

(c) The extent to which there is duplication of effort by government agencies in their support of UN/CEFACT and other international organisations and standards development organisations concerning e-business and trade facilitation

(d) Steps being taken by countries that are users of UN/CEFACT's products and services to champion these achievements with other countries in support of its global remit
