**UNITED
NATIONS**

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Economic and Social Council

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Thirteenth session
Geneva, 14-16 May 2007
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

REPORTS OF THE RAPPORTEURS

<u>Report by the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia on the development of the Asia Pacific Region</u>

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   The countries and regional bodies in the Asia Pacific region are well aware of the value and potential of electronic business and trade facilitation measures and are taking dynamic steps in pilot implementation and active discussion among stakeholders.   This report by the Rapporteur for Asia on the development in the region is based on his observations and interactions with regional bodies since the 12th UN/CEFACT Plenary meeting.

II.   ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL FOR TRADE FACILITATION AND ELECTRONIC BUSINESS

2.   Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT) is a regional body mandated to support regional policies and activities in the Asia Pacific, especially those promoted by UN/CEFACT, that promotes and improves the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations to exchange products and services effectively in a non-political environment.

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3.   The 24th AFACT meeting and the Electronic Data Interchange for the Commission (EDICOM) Conference were held from 7 to 10 August 2006 in Karachi, Pakistan. The event was hosted by the Electronic Commerce Resource Center (ECRC) Pakistan and attended by more than 100 experts from 12 member economies, as well as associate members. The event comprised a Steering Committee meeting on 7 August, Joint Working Group meetings on 8 August, and the Plenary meeting on 9 August, followed by the EDICOM conference on 10 August.

4.   At the 24th AFACT Plenary meeting after the welcome and opening remarks made by 2006 AFACT chairman, Mr. Javed Naushahi of Pakistan, the following decisions were made:

   (a) The Plenary approved Afghanistan as its eighteenth member and noted that AFACT membership maintained 18 member countries and economies and two associate members as of 2006. The Plenary also noted that hosts for the AFACT meetings up to the year 2010 had been identified.
   (b) The Plenary noted the delay in the development of AFACT Roadmap and agreed to continue working on it to deliver it by the Steering Committee mid-term meeting in 2007. The AFACT Roadmap will be used as a guide for AFACT activities in the term of 3-5 future years. The Plenary also agreed to revise its Bylaws to reflect internal and external changes.
   (c) The Plenary elected Heads of Delegation of Islamic Republic of Iran and Philippines as new Steering Committee members for the next two year terms.
   (d) Thailand confirmed its commitment to organize the eAsia Award in conjunction with 25th AFACT event as the host.
   (e) The AFACT Plenary noted the activities of Joint Working Groups (JWGs). JWGs focused their work on implementation issues such as electronic Certificates of Origin, Single Windows and United Nations electronic Trade Documents (UneDocs), and facilitated identification of possible collaboration among JWGs through joint meetings.
   (f) Thailand will host the 25th AFACT meeting and EDICOM 2007. The 2007 AFACT Steering Committee mid-term meeting is scheduled for 26 and 27 April 2007 in Phuket, Thailand, and the AFACT annual meeting and the EDICOM conference are scheduled to be held from 31 July to 3 August 2007 in Bangkok. In conjunction with AFACT event, Thailand will host the 3rd eAsia Award in 2007, which is an AFACT-sponsored award program for regional best practices in the areas of e-Business, trade facilitation and digital divide.
   (g) The 26th AFACT Meeting and EDICOM 2008 will be hosted by the Republic of Korea in 2008.

5.   The annual EDICOM conference was held on Aug. 10, 2006 under the theme of the "UNeDocs Single Window for Paperless Trade." About 70 domestic and regional experts participated in the Conference. The Conference covered issues on such themes as e-Banking and payment systems, e-Laws and the regulatory framework and the e-Trade roadmap for Pakistan, with the participation of expert speakers from the World Bank, UN/CEFACT, and other international organizations.

III.   THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER BODIES IN THE REGION

eBusiness Asia Committee
5.   The eBusiness Asia Committee (eAC) is a regional body to promote the implementation of eBusiness standards and technologies in the region. The Committee held its 15th meeting from 29 to 31 May 2006 in Tokyo, Japan, and 16th meeting from 8 to 10 November 2006 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The Committee is composed of a Plenary and two task groups (Core Component and Interoperability).

6.   The Interoperability Task Group (ITG) is working on ebMS version 3.0 issues and action plan for the Web Services Reliability test. The Core Component Task Group (CCTG) continued work on the development and maintenance of eAC Core Component Library. The CCTG is also working on eLogistics issues, with the discussion focused on UCR (Unique Consignment Reference) implementation. At its 16th meeting, the eAC resolved to have its interim meeting during the annual AFACT meeting in 2007 to pursue active cooperation with AFACT. The 17th eAC meeting is to be held in Wuhan, China, around May 2007, and is yet to be confirmed by the potential host.

Pan Asian eCommerce Alliance
7.   The Pan Asian eCommerce Alliance (PAA) is an industry-led alliance aimed at enabling secure and reliable cross-border transmission of trade and logistics-related documents. PAA was established in July 2000 by three member economies of the Asian region. There are currently nine member organizations from regional economies, which include the China International Electronic Commerce Centre (CIECC); TradeVan of Taiwan Province of China; TradeLink of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; the Trade Electronic Data Interchange (TEDI) of Japan; KTNET, an electronic trade service and solution provider in the Republic of Korea; TedMev of Macao Special Administrative Region; DagangNet of Malaysia; CrimsonLogic of Singapore; and CAT Telecom of Thailand. PAA continues its regular meetings and projects to exchange trade documents among members, which include:

(a) the ECO (Electronic Certificate of Origin) between the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China;
(b) the Air Way Bill between Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Republic of Korea; and
(c) four commercial documents (purchase order, commercial invoice, packing list and advanced); and the shipment notice used in the textile industry between Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Republic of Korea.

IV.   THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTER-REGIONAL BODIES

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
8.   In the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), there are two forums that have direct relevance to the work of UN/CEFACT. One is the Electronic Commerce Steering Group (ECSG), which focuses on issues of electronic commerce. The other is the Subcommittee on Customs

Procedure (SCCP), which is located under the Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI). Under ECSG, there is a Paperless Trading Subgroup. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia participated in the 14th and 15th APEC ECSG meetings on behalf of UN/CEFACT as an official guest, which was granted by APEC to UN/CEFACT in the 13th ECSG meeting in February 2006. The 14th ECSG Meeting was held in September 2006 in Da Nang, Viet Nam. In conjunction with the 14th ECSG meeting, the "APEC Symposium on Paperless Business Transaction: Matching Benefits of Public and Private Sectors" was organized to identify issues and potential solutions. The 15th ECSG meeting was also held in January 2007 in Canberra, Australia. In the 15th ECSG meeting, a joint symposium on paperless trade capacity-building was proposed as a concrete collaboration item between UN/CEFACT and APEC ECSG. The 15th ECSG meeting also addressed, inter alia, the e-Invoice Framework project proposal made by Peru, the paperless trade capacity-building and intellectual property rights protection project, the electronic Certificate of Origin Pathfinder project, and eB/L (electronic Bill of Lading).

9. The SCCP initiated a Single Window Initiative and formed a Single Window Working Group (SWWG) to develop strategic plan for and development report on the APEC single window. The SWWG held its kick-off meeting in November 2006 and plans to hold a workshop in the middle of April 2007. One of the UN/CEFACT Vice-Chairs, Mr. T.A. Khan, participated in the SWWG kick-off meeting to represent UN/CEFACT. It is expected that UN/CEFACT will be invited to the April workshop of the SWWG. The SCCP plans to complete the development of APEC single window strategic plan and development report by June 2007.

ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting)
10. The 5th Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) E-Commerce Seminar and Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) meeting was held on November 2-3, 2006 in Jiaxing, China. 200 stakeholders from 16 member countries in Europe and Asia participated. The seminar covered such topics as e-Health, e-Education and e-Commerce construction and application. The TFAP meeting adopted the "Basic Guideline for Paperless Trade in ASEM," submitted by the Republic of Korea, as its official deliverable. The TFAP meeting also discussed issues on intellectual property right, radio frequency identification, e-health and the protection of personal information.

Asia Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade
11. The Asia Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade (ASEAL) is a cross-regional alliance among service providers in Europe and Asia to simplify trade exchanges between European and Asian countries. ASEAL held its third meeting from 9 to 11 January 2007 in France with the participation of about 110 stakeholders in Europe and Asia. The event was attended by ASEAL founding members, the ASEAL Plenary conference and the international colloquium. At the meeting, DagangNet of Malaysia became a new member, increasing ASEAL membership to six (France, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan Province of China and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The meeting was attended by Luxembourg, Morocco, Senegal, Spain, Thailand and Viet Nam as observers. The chairmanship and the duty of secretariat were taken by France for the next two years.

V. OTHER EVENT

The United Nations electronic Trade Documents Workshop

12.   In conjunction with 9th UN/CEFACT Forum, the UNeDocs workshop was held on 3 October 2006 in New Delhi, India. The goal of workshop was to present important international standards for document and information harmonization and exchange in international trade, to discuss the national and regional adaptation and implementation of these standards, and to exchange know-how and best practice on pilot projects. The focus was more on the stakeholders in the region, especially South Asia. 122 people from all over the world participated. The workshop explained UneDocs and covered implementation cases of UNeDocs and the need for data harmonization in cross-border trade. The workshop was followed by a technical discussion session on 4 October for detailed discussion and practice on UNeDocs. On the basis of active discussion of issues, the workshop produced five recommendations, including on the need for "development of a Cross Border Reference Data Model based on the data models of UNeDocs and WCO" and for "development of a national pool of experts for the implementation of UNeDocs in India." The full text of UNeDocs Recommendations is available at:
http://www.unece.org/trade/workshop/unedocs_india06/UNeDocs_Recommendations.pdf

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

13.   The Rapporteur for Asia notes that the region is characterized by a high awareness of and dynamic action towards implementing electronic business and trade facilitation measures, especially paperless trading. Consequently, the Rapporteur recommends that UN/CEFACT take more active steps for concrete collaboration with regional bodies. Also, to enhance collaboration between UN/CEFACT groups and AFACT JWGs at the working and expert level, there should be mutual efforts to establish a concrete collaboration mechanism.