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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and
Standardization Policies

Seventeenth session
Geneva, 3-4 November 2008
Item 4(c) of the provisional agenda

PANEL SESSIONS

**Panel session 3 – Private Standards
jointly organized with the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

I. BACKGROUND

1. When buying a product, consumers, businesses and public administrations may need or may want to be informed about the good's features, including its technical specifications, its reliability and safety as well as the environmental impact of the production process and the social conditions of the workers employed therein. For these reasons, and in an effort to establish their brand name as a mark of reassurance for their customers, retailer chains and large multinationals demand that their suppliers meet specific requirements or "company specifications", often referred to as "private standards".

2. Producers then have an additional burden which often comes on top of the required proof of conformity with government regulations, international standards and certification schemes. In the absence of any effective coordination mechanism among the different players on the supply chain, conflicting demands on producing firms entail important costs. In particular, there is a loss of economies of scale, as products need to be customized not only for different countries and different clients, while the amount of information that needs to be prepared is simply overwhelming.

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3. At its last session, the Working Party asked the group of rapporteurs to consider the issue of private standards or company specifications, and at their request the Secretariat is organizing an informal discussion on this subject.

II. SESSION TIMETABLE (4 November 2008)

- 10:00 Introduction by the W. P. 6 Chairperson, Mr. Christer Arvius
- 10:10 Presentation of an issues paper by the Swedish National Board of Trade
Speaker to be confirmed
- 10:25 Private Standards and Market Access: A Mapping Exercise in the Textiles and
Apparel Sector
Ms. Muge Dolun, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- 10:40 Panel discussion
- 11:10 Agricultural Goods Exports: A View from Africa
Ms. Rachel Ntoyai, Senior Plant Inspection, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service
(KEPHIS) – Video link from Kenya
- 11:30 A Comparative Analysis of the Situation in Africa, Asia and Latin America
Mr. Ulrich Hoffmann, Chief, Trade & Sustainable Development Section, United
Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- 11:45 Presentation by a voluntary standard association body
Speaker to be confirmed
- 12:00 Private Standards versus International Standards
Dorian LaFond, United States Department of Agriculture and Chairperson of the
UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce
- 12:15 Panel discussion
- 12:45 Conclusions and follow-up
