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CAPACITY-BUILDING

Report on Capacity-building and Implementation Activities

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Based on the Decision by the Committee on Trade (ECE/TRADE/C/2006/18, para. 14 (vi)) requesting its subsidiary bodies to “develop and support capacity-building activities and partnerships” and a request by the Extended Bureau of the Committee at its October 2008 session, the following document summarizes the capacity-building and implementation activities carried out by all three subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Trade, as well as those by the Regional Advisor.

I. CAPACITY-BUILDING ON TRADE FACILITATION

1. In 2007 and 2008, the Regional Adviser in UNECE Trade concentrated on the following technical assistance activities:

(a) Two initiatives on trade data harmonization and the Single Window using UNECE standards and recommendations in South East Europe (SEE) and the EurAsEC (Euro Asian Economic Cooperation) were supported by five workshops in Moscow, Ohrid, Almaty, Belgrade and St. Petersburg. The results were encouraging: three countries have started to implement Single Window projects (FYR Macedonia, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan); one strengthening its work on a Single Window (Serbia); and many others (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, for example) deciding to establish such projects (e.g. Presidential Decree to that effect in Azerbaijan). All recipient countries and partner agencies (e.g. World Customs Organization, European Commission, United States Customs and Border Protection) appreciated the results and strongly support the idea of continuing work on these initiatives.

(b) In the framework of UNECE support to the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) member countries, the Regional Adviser continued implementing the 5th tranche UNDA project on trade facilitation in Central Asia with three training seminars and several meetings of the SPECA Working Group on Trade.

(c) Advisory services were organized on specific topics that had been requested by Member States with economies in transition. Typically, these services lead to training and implementation activities in the countries and were well appreciated (notably on the donor side by Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, as well as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and the German Government, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and USAID). As a result, a number of donor agencies have started financing projects for the implementation of United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) standards (e.g. Recommendation 4 in Kyrgyzstan, Recommendation 33 and other recommendations and standards in the FYR Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, among others).

(d) Capacity-building on trade policy issues and the World Trade Organization (WTO) trade facilitation negotiations continued (e.g. a national seminar in Azerbaijan in January 2008). Regional trade integration in Central Asia, WTO accession, policy issues related to the use of international agricultural and trade facilitation standards and other trade policy issues were among the key topics of the regular meetings of the SPECA Working Group on Trade (Berlin, November 2007, and Bishkek, October 2008). UNECE prepared a policy paper on regional trade integration for the Group, which was also published in Kyrgyzstan, in the BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest and by the Asian Development Bank.

2. Altogether, the regional adviser organized demand-driven training workshops and advisory services in 19 countries with 265 participants in 2007 and in 15 countries with more than 320 participants in 2008.

3. Many national co-organizers and particularly specialists on data harmonization and the Single Window expressed the highest level of satisfaction among participants in these activities. Stakeholders who found a niche to develop their projects on the basis of input from the regional adviser were the most satisfied. Experts and donor agencies working on the Single Window were also very pleased. Participants also appreciated the training sessions on trade facilitation for

WTO negotiators. An active network among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) negotiators was created and maintained. Requests were made by Uzbekistan and Mongolia to prepare a simple guide on how to use UN/EDIFACT, while Kazakhstan translated the United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory into Russian at its own expense. The Southeast European countries were particularly interested in the activities on the Single Window and data harmonization as well as the e-business strategy guidelines developed by the UNECE Regional Adviser. All SEE countries participating in the eSEE initiative committed to develop an e-business strategy. Croatia took the lead and developed a very sophisticated strategy, which went beyond the original guidelines.

A. UNeDocs

4. The UNECE Trade and Timber Division and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) co-organized a seminar in Bangkok (December 2007) on the use of the project, United Nations electronic trade documents (UNeDocs) in Single Window systems. The participants of the seminar recommended the creation of an Asia-Pacific network of specialists on electronic trade documents (UN NEXT).

B. Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide

5. The Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (financed by extra-budgetary resources and developed by UN/CEFACT) is being developed as a tool to support the efforts of countries and regions to improve their international trade performance. It provides a rationale and supporting information for the implementation of improvements in trade processes and procedures. It is intended to be used in a workshop format designed to help a country or region develop and implement a strategy and action plan that ensure trade facilitation policies, practices and procedures are simple, transparent, and effective. The Guide – once finalized – will be used as the basis for capacity-building in developing and transition economies.

6. As part of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide project (financed by Sweden), two pilot workshops were held to test how the Guide could be used “in the field”. Two workshops were devoted to identifying trade facilitation concerns and priorities: one in Uganda (October 2008) was on a national level, and the second, in Malaysia, was on a regional level (November 2008), organized in cooperation with the ASEAN secretariat and participants from eight ASEAN countries. Based on the Guide’s approaches and information, participants of both workshops were able to identify and agree on common key results in trade facilitation areas and elaborate the means to achieve these goals.

7. The practical usefulness of the Guide demonstrated its possibilities for further use in capacity-building and awareness-raising programmes in developing and transition economies. The Guide should be finalized by spring 2009.

C. Lessons learned

8. UNECE clients, partners and interlocutors in the transition countries (and sometimes transition and developing countries outside the region) are primarily interested in practical implementation activities (rather than broad policy issues), in particular: (i) the Single Window (including training on trade facilitation Recommendation 33: The Single Window); (ii) the topic

of draft Recommendation 34 (data harmonization) and (iii) the topic of Recommendation 35 (legal aspects of the Single Window and data harmonization). The participants, representatives of government agencies, partner regional organizations and donor funded projects on trade facilitation requested finalization of the draft Recommendations 34 and 35 as a priority for UN/CEFACT.

9. The countries made use of Recommendation 33, as witnessed by the Presidential Decree on establishing a Single Window in Mongolia, by the Single Window projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as the projects in the fYR Macedonia and Serbia. The participants in the training activities agreed that future recommendations on data harmonization and legal aspects of the Single Window are urgently needed and should be prepared in an accessible language. After training workshops and the seminar in St Petersburg in 2008, partners in EurAsEC also expressed their eagerness to have these instruments (recommendations) available.

10. Interest in countries with transition economies is focused on trade procedures like simplifying trade and transport procedures, cutting red tape in trade information exchange and streamlining border-crossing procedures (this is the focus, for example, of the GTZ projects on trade facilitation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Their interest is also the practical implementation of e-business standards to support simplified trade procedures, as noted in requests for cooperation by EurAsEC, the governments of the fYR Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Uzbekistan.

D. Plans for 2009

11. Initiatives on data harmonization and the Single Window will continue in 2009. Training workshops are envisaged for Southeast Europe, the South Caucasus and the EurAsEC countries. A meeting in Geneva of the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade is planned for autumn 2009. It will focus on WTO accession and negotiations, and interaction with the Geneva-based international organizations working in the trade area.

II. CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES ON REGULATORY COOPERATION AND STANDARDIZATION POLICIES

12. In the summer of 2008, the secretariat of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) developed a project to establish a clear framework and guidelines for the operation of market surveillance based on good practice worldwide. It aims at reinforcing coordination among relevant stakeholders at a national, regional and interregional level, in particular to exchange information on defective or unsafe products that pose a serious threat to public safety and undermine both local and international trade in legitimate products. The project proposal was endorsed by the 2007 UNECE WP.6 International Seminar on Product Safety and Counterfeiting as well as the Working Party itself and the secretariat is currently looking for extra-budgetary funding for its implementation.

III. CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES ON QUALITY AGRICULTURAL STANDARDS, 2008-2009

13. An International Workshop on seed potatoes took place in Kislovodsk, Russian Federation from 9 to 11 September 2008. The purpose of the workshop was to promote the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes in the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The conclusions and recommendations of the workshop were transmitted to the policy-makers in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation as input to their work on a national standard for seed potatoes and draft legislation on seed production.

14. A Joint Russia/UNECE/EU Seminar on Standards for Eggs and Egg Products was held in Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia from 23 to 25 September 2008. It aimed to revise the five UNECE standards on eggs and egg products in effect since 1986. The revised texts will be submitted to the April 2009 session of the Specialized Section on Meat for approval.

15. The Joint Russia/UNECE Seminar: "International Standards on Meat and Meat Products – a Common Language for International Trade" was held in Moscow on 30 September to 2 October 2008. It demonstrated to meat specialists how to process porcine carcasses, based on the UNECE standard, into retail cuts according to United States and French/European methodologies. The meat-cutting live performance was filmed by cameras from different angles. The five-hour video material will be used for training purposes.

16. An International Seminar on the standard for duck meat was held in Nanjing, China on 2 to 4 December 2008. The purpose of the Joint China/UNECE Seminar on Meat Standards was to promote the recently adopted UNECE Standard on Duck Meat - Carcasses and Parts, which was developed with considerable input from the delegation of China. Participants also discussed the importance of internationally agreed meat standards that China could use to improve the quality of their products and strengthen their meat industry.

17. An International Workshop on seed potatoes for countries of Africa and the Middle East will take place in Cairo, Egypt on 16 to 19 March 2009, funded by the United Nations Development Account and in cooperation with other regional Commissions. The workshop will present UNECE standards on potatoes and show how they can be used to produce healthy and high-yielding seed, as well as early and ware potatoes for domestic consumption and export. It will help producers understand what requirements they need to meet to be able to export their produce to the EU market and other markets that use UNECE standards.

18. Other capacity-building activities are being planned. Their topics, dates and places will be communicated on the web site (www.unece.org/trade).
