



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2009/4
29 June 2009

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fifty-fifth session
Geneva, 4-8 May 2009

**REPORT OF THE SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION
OF FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES ON ITS FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION**

Summary

The Specialized Section:

- revised the text of the Standard Layout and recommended that the Working Party adopt it as a new Standard Layout, and decided to partially align the old standards with the revised Standard Layout;
- submitted to the Working Party the amended texts on apples, avocados, citrus fruit, sweet peppers, pears and apricots for approval as revised UNECE standards. It also recommended that the Working Party adopt the text on chanterelles as new UNECE standard;
- submitted to the Working Party the revised text of the UNECE Brochure for Sweet Peppers for approval;
- decided to meet twice a year.

The UNECE cooperation and the OECD exploratory task forces met jointly during the meeting to discuss progress in concentrating activities in agricultural quality standards within UNECE.

Texts of documents with the revisions introduced by the delegations can be found at:
www.unece.org/trade/agr/meetings/ge.01/2009-in-session.htm

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened and chaired by Mrs. Ulrike Bickelman (Germany). The discussion of items 6 (d) - (k) was chaired by Ms. Kristina Mattsson (Sweden).

II. ATTENDANCE

2. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

3. The European Community (EC) was also represented.

4. The following specialized agency/programme participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (Codex Alimentarius).

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2009/1

5. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with proposed changes and amendments.

6. Texts of documents with the revisions introduced by the delegations can be found as post-session documents at: www.unece.org/trade/agr/meetings/ge.01/2009-in-session.htm.

IV. MATTERS OF INTEREST SINCE THE LAST SESSION (Agenda item 2)

A. UNECE and subsidiary bodies (Agenda item 2(a))

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/2007/19, ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/27,
ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/12, ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/13

7. The delegations were informed about the decisions of relevance to the work of the Specialized Section taken by the November 2008 session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2008/25, paras. 23-33, 43-48).

B. Other organizations (Agenda item 2(b))

8. The OECD representative informed the meeting about the activities carried out or planned by the Organization in the period since the 2008 session of the Specialized Section. Two new member countries, Kenya and Serbia, had joined the Scheme in 2008. The peer review on fruit and vegetables quality inspection system in Hungary had been published in 2008. The peer review on the Slovak quality inspection system had been undertaken in 2008 and published in April 2009 and the next peer review on the Moroccan fruit and vegetables quality inspection system would be undertaken in 2009.

9. The Scheme had published explanatory brochures on kiwifruit and cucumbers in 2008. The explanatory brochures on potatoes, pears and inshell hazelnuts had been adopted and would be published in mid-2009. Good progress had been made on the brochures on citrus fruits and apples in 2008. The final adoption of these brochures was expected at the 2009 Plenary Meeting. Work was continuing on brochures on apricots and peaches and nectarines.
10. The Scheme had initialized work on distance learning tools. The OECD Secretariat was examining the possibility of developing a common project on that issue with FAO.
11. The work on the Guidelines on Inspection and Inspectors' Training, as well as the work on sampling, had continued in 2008. A workshop on sampling was expected during the week of the 2009 Plenary Meeting.
12. Information on the meetings organized by the OECD Scheme is available in the "International meetings calendar" on the UNECE website.
13. The representative of the secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the meeting about the next session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to be held in Mexico from 19 to 23 October 2009. The Committee would discuss several draft and proposed draft standards, including the Standards for Apples and Chilli Peppers, and would revise the Standard for Avocados. Electronic working groups were currently drawing up proposals for consideration by the Committee.
14. The representative of the European Commission provided information on Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007 amended by Regulation (EC) No 1221/2008 which had been published in December 2008. It would apply as from 1 July 2009. It introduced a general marketing standard for all fruits and vegetables subject to Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007, maintained 10 of the 36 specific marketing standards and simplified the conformity checks. According to article 13(1) of Regulation 1580/2007, "At the request of a third country, the Commission may approve [...] checks on conformity to specific marketing standards performed by this third country prior to import into the Community".
15. Upon the request by South Africa, the representative of the European Commission pointed out that the approval of checking operations performed by third countries would continue, but cover only the 10 specific standards.
16. The European Commission had launched a call for tender for a study "Marketing standards in the fruit and vegetable sector". The study had two objectives: first, to determine to what extent specific marketing standards for fruit and vegetables in the European Union were useful for the actors of the fruit and vegetables sector and, second, to assess the validity of the arguments in favour of or against repealing specific marketing standards. The maximum budget attributed to this project was EUR 180 000. The deadline for submitting offers was on 21 August 2009.
17. The Commission intended to award the contract at the end of 2009, following the evaluation of the offers received. The contractor would have to carry out the study within 9 months of signing the contract. Results could become available at the end of 2010.

**C. Concentration of agricultural quality standards work in the UNECE
(Agenda item 2(c))**

18. The UNECE cooperation task force and the OECD exploratory task force met jointly during the meeting to discuss progress in concentrating activities in agricultural quality standards within UNECE. If the OECD Scheme decided in December this year to transfer the work, UNECE should start drawing up two new brochures, on pineapple and chilli peppers. The delegations of Kenya and Mexico volunteered to be the focal points for these brochures. Countries were asked to let the secretariat and the focal points know of their interest in taking part in this work. The Bureau of the Specialized Section would propose a standard layout for brochures.

19. To speed up work on developing standards and explanatory material, it was suggested that the Specialized Section should meet twice a year. The November 2009 meeting would consist of a two-day session of the Specialized Section, followed by a two-day session of the Working Party. To make discussion effective at the meeting, proposals for revising or starting new standards should be circulated 8 weeks in advance. If substantive changes were made to the proposal during the meeting, the decision on adopting the revised text would have to be made at the subsequent meeting.

20. Meetings of national heads of inspection services and peer reviews could be carried out within the UNECE framework in a similar way as within the OECD Scheme, that is, with assistance from the secretariat but funded by the host country.

21. Should the OECD Scheme decide positively on the transfer, the task forces would advise on how to transfer the material and deal with the copyright issues. The task forces would send the final report on the transfer of work to the secretariat by 10 August so that it could be submitted to the November meeting of the Working Party.

V. REVISION OF THE STANDARD LAYOUT (Agenda item 3)

Documentation: Proposal by United Kingdom on quality tolerances (INF.2, Informal document)

22. The Specialized Section agreed to amend the section on tolerances in the Standard Layout according to the second option proposed by the delegation of the United Kingdom in document INF.2. Introducing tolerances for severe defects, including rots or any other serious flesh defects in Classes I and II at all marketing stages would favour traders but should not remove the responsibility for thorough checking at the packing house.

23. The Specialized Section decided to submit the amended text to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard Layout.

VI. REVISION OF UNECE STANDARDS (Agenda item 4)
UNECE EXPLANATORY BROCHURE FOR SWEET PEPPERS (Agenda item 7)

A. Apples (Agenda item 4(a))

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-50: Apples)

Proposals on the list of apple varieties (INF.3, Informal document)

Proposal by United Kingdom on quality tolerances (INF.2, Informal document)

Proposal by Italy on varietal groups (INF.24, Informal document)

24. The Specialized Section agreed to the changes proposed by the OECD Working Group and the delegation of Italy regarding the Standard and the list of varieties. The minimum requirements were amended to reflect serious watercore, with the exception of Fuji and its mutants; minimum surface colour characteristics and minimum requirements on russeting were transferred from the annex to the classification section of the Standard; the minimum colouring requirements for Class II were deleted; the section on size tolerances was simplified. The wording related to mixtures of varieties was aligned with the Standard Layout.

25. The table of varieties was restructured to contain columns for variety, mutant, synonyms, trade names, colour group and russeting. The column on size was deleted.

26. The delegations agreed that for the purpose of this Standard and in order to provide the consumer with the most essential information, mutants should be indicated by the name of the original variety, which could be replaced by a synonym. The name of the mutant or a trade name could only be given in addition to the variety or synonym.

27. The Specialized Section decided to submit the amended text to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Apples. The delegations would check the new provisions of the standard with their industry and provide the secretariat with comments by the end of August.

28. The Specialized Section took note of the comment by the delegation of the United States that the colour requirements in the revised Standard were higher than those in some regions, including those of the United States. Several delegations argued that, on the contrary, the colour requirements in the Standard were lower than those described by breeders. Also, Class II of the revised Standard did not contain any colour requirements, which allowed a wide range of apples to enter the market.

B. Mushrooms (Agenda item 4(b))

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-24: Cultivated mushrooms)

29. The Specialized Section decided to retain the standard provision on how mushrooms should be cut. Deleting that provision would lower the quality and create problems in grading mushrooms by the length of the stem.

C. Avocados (Agenda item 4(c))

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-42: Avocados)
Proposals by United States (INF.5, Informal document)

30. The delegations agreed with the proposal of the United States to incorporate Antillean avocado into the Standard. The changes introduced to the text of the Standard concerned sizing requirements, size tolerances and marking provisions.

31. The Specialized Section agreed to submit the revised text to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Avocados.

D. Citrus fruit (Agenda item 4(d))

Documentation: Summary of suggestions by countries (INF.6, Informal document)
The Standard (FFV-14: Citrus fruit)

32. The delegations reviewed the Standard on the basis of country proposals summarized by the delegation of Israel in document INF.6.

33. Definition of produce. The draft text was modified to incorporate the proposal by the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand the number of species covered by the Standard. It was pointed out that Latin terms set out in the draft revised Standard should be verified.

34. Minimum requirements. The Specialized Section decided that the proposal of South Africa on adding the word “practically” to the qualification of damage caused by pests would be more pertinent in the context of reviewing the Standard Layout, as an additional tolerance. If that type of damage were to be detected at packing house, zero tolerance should be applied; however, some tolerance should be allowed at the point of destination.

35. Damage to the skin resulting from “degreening” could be best reflected under skin defects accepted in different classes. Inspectors did not need to know what caused the defect.

36. Maturity requirements. The Specialized Section decided to add the minimum sugar/acid ratio to the list of parameters characterizing maturity of citrus fruit. Checking that ratio was of particular importance at the beginning of season to avoid shipping unripe fruit. The method for defining sugar/acid ratio, as recommended by the OECD Guidance, should be clearly referenced in the Standard.

37. The delegations decided on 20 per cent as the minimum juice content for all lemons.

38. Several delegations supported the use of the minimum maturity index, where necessary, as an important parameter to meet consumer requirements. Excessive use of prescriptive indices should be avoided in order not to over-complicate the international standards.

39. The minimum sugar/acid ratio of 6.5:1 for all orange types was agreeable for all delegations. Most countries would like to set this ratio to 7.0:1. The delegation of Spain and other delegations would check with producers if the higher limit would be acceptable.

40. The secretariat would ask the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide information on the volume of sour oranges traded for the fresh market, minimum maturity requirements and sizing provisions, before that variety could be included in the Standard.

41. Classification. The proposals by Cuba and the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the defects affecting the pulp were not incorporated into the draft, as they were already covered under the minimum requirements and the provisions concerning tolerances.

42. Sizing. The Specialized Section agreed that the text of the Standard should give the possibility of sizing fruit either by the traditional size ranges, by a simple uniformity of size or by count. This would give flexibility to traders to pack fruit according to sizing preferences of their destination markets. Maintaining the traditional sizing scale was important for producers and traders because it structured the market in terms of prices. The introduction of a simple sizing uniformity rule reflected current practices in some regions. This type of sizing is, for example, practical for packing and re-packing bulk shipments.

43. Tolerances. The delegation of the United States suggested increasing tolerances for superficial skin defects. In tropical areas, the skin of citrus fruit was affected by rubbing due to strong winds, and by a wide range of pests. That could be reflected in higher tolerances for all classes. However, increasing tolerances alone would not solve the problem of interpreting the "slight skin defect" requirement. The surface area allowed must also receive attention and should be addressed in the OECD explanatory brochure for citrus fruit. The delegation of the United States agreed to take up that issue at the OECD Working Group on citrus fruit.

44. Presentation. The Specialized Section took note of the suggestion by Cuba to exclude the text allowing presentation with short twigs and green leaves. That type of presentation was common in some markets where it did not cause any phytosanitary problems.

45. Marking. The Specialized Section accepted, with some modifications, the proposal of Spain on marking the nature of produce. It was clarified that for lemons, traders could optionally indicate "Verdelli" and "Primofiore" on the box, in addition to the name of the variety.

46. The delegations agreed that the marking: (a) "Clementines, seedless" was for clementines with no seeds; (b) "Clementines" was for clementines with 1 to 10 seeds; and (c) "Clementines, with seeds" was for clementines with more than 10 seeds. Some delegations said that they would need to check how "seedless" was classified by their trade.

47. The delegation of Spain pointed out that the mention of the use of preserving agents or other chemical substance in the Standard was discriminatory towards citrus fruit and should therefore be deleted from the commercial specifications. The post-harvest treatment of fruits was a food safety issue and should not be addressed in the marketing standard. Some delegations were in favour of informing consumers about the use of post-harvest treatment on the package. It

was suggested that the issue of indicating post-harvest treatment be discussed within the framework of the Standard Layout.

48. The Specialized Section reached an agreement on the following wording on the post-harvest treatment of citrus fruit in the provisions on commercial specifications: “Post-harvest treatment (optional, based on the national legislation of the importing country)”. The delegation of Spain wished to consult with their industry before confirming their final acceptance of the proposed wording.

49. Colouring. The Specialized Section agreed that colouring was not a reliable minimum maturity indicator. However, in many countries it was an important marketing parameter. The Specialized Section decided to delete “colouring” from the list of minimum maturity requirements and include the following as a footnote to the summary table on maturity requirements by species: “Green-skinned citrus fruit is regarded as mature if minimum maturity levels established for the relevant species are met”. The delegation of Spain expressed its preference for maintaining the current wording in the Standard.

50. Reference to the “sales unit”, as defined in the Standard Layout, was included in the presentation uniformity provisions.

51. The Specialized Section decided to submit the text of the Standard to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Citrus Fruit. The delegations were invited to consult with their industry experts on the agreed provisions of the Standard and send any comments to the secretariat by the end of August. The secretariat was asked to approach the delegation of Chile to check if they would withdraw their reservation on the post-harvest treatment provision in the revised Standard.

E. Tomatoes (Agenda item 4(e))

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-36: Tomatoes)

Proposals by United States on sizing by count (INF.20, Informal document)

52. Minor changes were introduced to the format of the section on sizing to make it clearer that the United States’ national practice in sizing greenhouse tomatoes by count and uniformity were reflected in the Standard.

F. Sweet peppers and UNECE explanatory brochure for sweet peppers (Agenda item 4(f) and Agenda item 7)

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-28: Sweet peppers)

Draft revised Standard (INF.8, Informal document)

Draft brochure (INF.19, Informal document)

53. The delegations agreed with the changes proposed in document INF.8. In addition, provisions on sizing by weight were incorporated into the text. It was decided not to mention commercial types of sweet peppers in the Standard but to cover them in the explanatory brochure. It was also agreed that the types covered by the Standard could be hot. The Specialized

Section decided to submit the amended text to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Sweet Peppers.

54. The delegations reviewed the draft explanatory brochure for sweet peppers. The secretariat was asked to reflect the comments in the text of the brochure and to complete it with photographs of blossom end rot and sunburn, offered by the delegation of Hungary. Comments on some photographs could advise packers on what to do with peppers having specific defects.

55. The brochure should be published in the A-4 format. The text and photographs would appear together. The text of the standard should be visually distinct from the interpretative text. A separate publication would be produced in each of the three official UNECE languages (English, French and Russian). If a country decided to produce a brochure in a language other than one of the official UNECE languages, the brochure should also include the text in one of the official languages. The publication would not be a ring binder but a bound volume. The electronic version would be prepared in Adobe In-Design, a publishing programme.

56. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare a pre-print and circulate it to delegations for final checking before submitting it to the Working Party for approval as the UNECE Brochure for Sweet Peppers.

G. Pears (Agenda item 4(g))

Documentation: The Standard (FFV-51: Pears)

57. The Specialized Section agreed to the proposal by the OECD Working Group to delete provisions on defects in colouring from the characteristics of quality classes, because such “defects” did not cause quality problems with pears. Several delegations preferred to consult with the industry and would inform the secretariat about the outcome. In case of agreement, the text would be submitted to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Pears.

VII. REVIEW OF UNECE RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda item 5)

A. Apricots (Agenda item 5(a))

Documentation: The Recommendation (FFV-02: Apricots)
Working Group proposals (INF.9, Informal document)
Proposals by the United Kingdom (INF.10, Informal document)

58. The delegations agreed to the proposal by the United Kingdom to include slight healed cracks in the provisions for skin defects in classes I and II.

59. Countries needed time to check the proposal of establishing the minimum size for apricots at 30 mm. Except for some small varieties, apricots below that size would be insufficiently developed. The delegation of the United States preferred not to establish a minimum size.

60. Drawing on the proposal by Hungary, the Specialized Section included in the Standard draft provisions on minimum maturity. The change in the background colour was considered a good parameter to determine maturity of apricots. The Brix values should not be included in the Standard.

61. It was suggested to delete the provisions on defects in colouring from the characteristics of quality classes. Colour variations did not cause quality problems.

62. The Specialized Section decided to submit the text to the Working Party for approval as a revised Standard for Apricots. Countries were invited to send comments to the secretariat by the end of August at the latest.

B. Peaches and nectarines (Agenda item 5(b))

Documentation: The Recommendation (FFV-26: Peaches and nectarines)

63. The Specialized Section decided to postpone the review of the Recommendation on Peaches and Nectarines to the next session.

VIII. NEW UNECE STANDARDS (Agenda item 6)

A. Chanterelles (Agenda item 6(a))

Documentation: Draft standard for chanterelles (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2009/3)

64. The participants went through the draft standard for chanterelles, revised for the session by the delegation of France. In the English version of the document the term “varieties” was replaced by “species”. Provisions concerning sizing were reworded, and the section on presentation was deleted. Provisions concerning marking were amended. It was suggested to align the section on quality tolerances and the provisions on uniformity with the revised Standard Layout.

65. The Specialized Section decided to submit the text to the Working Party for approval as a new standard for chanterelles. The end of August was set as the deadline for submitting any further comments to the delegation of France and the secretariat.

B. Fresh chilli peppers (Agenda item 6(a))

Documentation: Draft standard for fresh chilli peppers (INF.13, Informal document)

66. The Specialized Section reviewed the revised draft Standard for Fresh Chilli Peppers presented by the delegation of Mexico. The delegations noted that the detailed sizing provisions were important for marketing chilli peppers, however there might be a way of simplifying them. It was suggested that provisions on size tolerances be aligned with the Standard Layout and that mixtures of chilli peppers be allowed in the provisions on presentation. A section on commercial

specifications should be added. The table describing the causes of defects should be moved to the explanatory brochure.

67. The Specialized Section asked the delegation of Mexico to finalize the text of the draft Standard for consideration at its next session.

C. Shallots (Agenda item 6(c))

Documentation: Draft standard for shallots (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2009/2)

68. Several delegations met informally to discuss the draft standard for shallots, proposed by France. The delegation of France might wish to include the comments made at the informal meeting, as well as those that might be received from other countries, and resubmit the draft text to the next meeting of the Specialized Section for consideration and approval.

D. – J. Proposals for new standards (Agenda item 6(d) – (j))

Documentation: Justification for new standards (INF.23, Informal document)

- (d) Berry fruit (INF.14, Informal document)
- (e) Lambs lettuce (INF.15, Informal document)
- (f) Rocket (INF.16, Informal document)
- (g) Kohlrabi (INF.17, Informal document)
- (h) Carrots and other root vegetables (INF.18, Informal document)
- (i) Tubercle vegetables (INF.21, Informal document)
- (j) Stalk and stalk-leaf vegetables (INF.22, Informal document)

69. The Specialized Section welcomed the initiative of Germany to start work on standards for groups of products. The commercial demand for more standards resulted from the introduction of the general marketing standard and the optional application of the UNECE standards, according to the new EC regulation. To price their products and to have an agreed minimum quality, growers and traders needed internationally agreed references on quality classes. Since the number of fresh fruits and vegetables covered by the EC general marketing standard was significant, it would be practical to draw up standards for groups of products.

70. The delegations had an initial discussion on the draft group standards for berry fruit and root vegetables. Questions were raised about how to decide on the composition of groups, how to reflect specific characteristics of the products in the group. Would group standards replace the existing ones and what legal status they would have? Would they impose stricter requirements on individual products?

71. The Specialized Section agreed that the delegations should consult with the industry and submit written comments on the proposed group standard both to Germany and to the secretariat.

**IX. PROMOTION OF STANDARDS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES
(Agenda item 8)**

72. The secretariat and the delegations exchanged information on promotional and capacity-building activities that were either planned or had already taken place. That information would be reflected in the “International meetings calendar” available on the UNECE website.

73. The delegation of Kyrgyzstan made a presentation on the application of marketing standards in that country and invited the participants to the Regional Workshop on Agricultural Quality Standards and the Use of Standards in Technical Regulations, to be held in Osh from 14 to 17 July 2009.

X. FUTURE WORK (Agenda item 9)

74. The fifty-sixth session of the Specialized Section would be held from 2 to 4 November, the Monday of 2 November being reserved for meetings of working groups. The delegations would consider the text of the Standard Layout and the standards for: apples, citrus fruit, sweet peppers (including the brochure), pears, apricots, chilli peppers, chanterelles, shallots, berry fruit, lambs lettuce, and peaches and nectarines.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 10)

75. The Specialized Section decided to partially align the old standards with the revised Standard Layout. The alignment would concern: (a) the introductory part on the stages of application; (b) tolerances; (c) the deletion of the word “new” in the section on packaging; and (d) the deletion of the sentence “Produce must be carefully picked”. The secretariat would proceed with the alignment of standards in consultation with the Bureau and the members of the Specialized Section.

76. The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme expressed concern about the removal of “UNECE” from the titles of standards published since November 2008 and questioned if any decision had been made to change the legal status and official titles of standards, from UNECE standards to United Nations standards. He further noted that there was no record of a decision to remove the reference to UNECE in the titles of standards, while the decision had been made to remove “United Nations Economic Commission for Europe” from the upper part of the cover page of standards at the sixty-fourth session of the Working Party. He expressed the concern that the elaboration of worldwide standards might go beyond the mandate of UNECE.

77. The secretariat explained that the Working Party’s decision to remove “UNECE” from the cover pages of the standards was prompted by: (a) the specialized sections who did not want to give the impression that the standards that they develop were meant to be used within the UNECE region only; and (b) the suggested transfer of work of the OECD Scheme, some countries of which are not UNECE member States, to UNECE. The revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party, approved by the Committee on Trade and the Executive Committee of UNECE, gave equal participation rights to all member countries of the United Nations.

78. It was further explained that the standards developed at UNECE, like those developed at Codex Alimentarius, are only recommendations and cannot be imposed on countries. Countries themselves decide what standards to use at the national or regional level. Many non-UNECE member countries were participating actively in the UNECE work on standards and explanatory material. In view of the global trade in fresh fruit and vegetables and bearing in mind the economic weight of the countries in the UNECE region, more and more countries were taking part in the UNECE work on standards and apply the standards nationally and regionally. The secretariat further indicated that some other UNECE subsidiary bodies had been involved in tasks of a global nature, such as in developing standards for electronic business.

79. The above issue will be revisited at the next session of the Working Party.

XII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Agenda item 11)

80. The Specialized Section re-elected Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany) as Chair and Ms. Kristina Mattsson (Sweden) as Vice-Chair.

XIII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 12)

81. The Specialized Section adopted the report of the session.