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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

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Geneva, 19-20 April 2021

Report of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) on its twenty-seventh session

I. Attendance

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held its twenty-seventh Plenary session as a hybrid meeting with virtual and in-person participation from 19 to 20 April 2021.
2. The following countries were represented: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, China, Congo (Republic of), Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Morocco, Netherlands, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, United States of America, Viet Nam. Representatives of the European Union were also present.
3. The following United Nations organizations participated in the meeting: UNECE Sustainable Transport Division, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The following non-governmental organization participated in the meeting: Bureau International des Conteneurs (BIC) and Global Standards 1 (GS1).
4. The Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Economic Cooperation and Trade Division opened the meeting. She underlined the numerous achievements of UN/CEFACT, particularly since the last Plenary and thanked the experts, the Bureau and the secretariat for their contributions. She underlined the great relevance of the deliverables on this Plenary's agenda such as the Disaster Recovery Recommendation, the electronic deliverables assisting to dematerialize trade processes (contributing to the UN's broader COVID response) and the Call to Action on Digitalization. She also underlined the UN/CEFACT contributions to a circular economy transition, the theme of UNECE's 69th Commission Session, with the work on traceability and transparency for the garment and footwear sector being particularly relevant. The Director noted important capacity building work which has been accomplished especially for beneficiary countries in Central Asia. On the way forward, the Director stressed the importance of ensuring the continued relevance of UN/CEFACT and noted the need to look at the triple challenge of prioritizing work streams; ensuring a proper resource base; and strengthening communication.
5. The UN/CEFACT Chair welcomed the delegates and underlined that the work of UN/CEFACT supports sustainable development both directly and indirectly, notably with UN/CEFACT work on dematerialization aimed at removing human contact and allowing the



reuse of data through semantic data models, essential in the context of the pandemic. She underlined that approaching new topics such as sustainability should come in addition to existing work on trade facilitation and e-business standards. She applauded the press recognition that some of our work receives and reminded that there are many efforts behind the scenes which may not always receive much public recognition, but which are critical for UN/CEFACT deliverables, notably the library maintenance and data maintenance.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)

6. The secretariat informed the Plenary that the draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/1/Rev.1.

Plenary decision 21-01: The Plenary adopted the *Annotated Provisional Agenda for the Twenty-Seventh Session* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/1/Rev.1).

III. Elections (Agenda Item 2)

7. The secretariat presented the applicable election procedure for the position of UN/CEFACT Chair for the next three-year period. In line with section E of the *Consolidated United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Mandate and Terms of Reference* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/15), these elections were announced on 18 January 2021 with a deadline for submissions by the relevant Permanent Missions in Geneva to the secretariat on 5 March 2021 at the latest. The candidate was announced to Heads of Delegation on 8 March 2021. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland nominated Ms. Sue Probert to the position of UN/CEFACT Chair for the period 2021-2024.

Plenary decision 21-02: The Plenary elected by acclamation Ms. Sue Probert as Chair of UN/CEFACT for the period 2021-2024.

8. The secretariat presented the applicable election procedure for the position of regional rapporteurs for the next two-year period. In line with section G of the *Consolidated United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Mandate and Terms of Reference* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/15), these elections were announced on 19 January 2021 with a deadline for submissions by the candidates to the secretariat on 5 March 2021 at the latest. Mr. Mor Talla Diop proposed his candidature for the position of UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for the region of Africa for the period 2021-2023. Mr. Hisanao Sugamata proposed his candidature for the position of UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for the region of Asia-Pacific for the period 2021-2023.

Plenary decision 21-03: The Plenary elected by acclamation Mr. Mor Talla Diop as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Africa and Mr. Hisanao Sugamata as UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteur for Asia-Pacific.

IV. Matters arising since the twenty-sixth session (Agenda Item 3)

9. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/3, *Matters arising since the twenty-sixth session*. The document outlines five key themes which support efforts towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

(a) Digitalization and dematerialization which underlines:

- The importance of rethinking the business process when moving from paper to digital;
- The wide range of deliverables already provided by UN/CEFACT (such as the Buy-Ship-Pay model, the semantic Core Component Library, the Reference

Data Models, hundreds of e-business standards and guidance documents directly related to building back better); and

- The reuse of these deliverables within other international organizations (such as the International Maritime Organization [IMO], the International Organization of Standards [ISO], Global Standards-1 [GS1], the International Civil Aviation Organization [ICAO] and others).

(b) Agriculture sustainable value chains which underlines:

- The importance of automated regulatory controls in cross-border trade of agriculture produce and wildlife;
- The deliverables developed by UN/CEFACT in this area (such as eCert, eQuality and future work on other electronic certificates); and
- The cooperation activities on the electronic exchange of CITES Permits, notably in support of the EC TRACES eCITES project component and the links with non-EU member administrations.

(c) Garment and footwear sustainable value chains which underlines:

- The interest that consumers increasingly place on more environmentally and ethically aware choices for their clothes and shoes and the importance that policy makers are giving to considerations of sustainability and circularity;
- The tools developed in support of this area (such as a policy recommendation, implementation guidelines, technical standards and a call to action); and
- The pilot on cotton value chains using blockchain technology and involving multiple stakeholders and countries.

(d) Advanced technologies which underlines:

- The growing importance of advanced technologies in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- The guidance material developed to support the use of advanced technologies to overcome disruptions caused by the pandemic and to support the move to a more circular economy.

(e) Capacity building which underlines:

- The challenge which trade facilitation reforms can represent for many countries;
- The support provided to Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of North Macedonia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic, aiming to assist in the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA); and
- The continued cooperation between the United Nations Regional Commissions on the fourth Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 and on efforts to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. The Regional Advisor provided a brief report of activities as outlined in document ECE/TRADE/CEFACT/2021/INF.1. His work to support the implementation of trade facilitation and UN/CEFACT standards focused on two areas:

- Assist countries – especially in the region of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) – to implement the WTO TFA, specifically in relation to the use of standards, streamlining procedures, Single Window and National Trade Facilitation Bodies
- Boost, under a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) inter-agency project, the implementation of UN/CEFACT semantic standards and Reference Data Models with the aim of limiting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on connectivity, trade and transport.

11. The secretariat also reported on its direct involvement in the UNECE Nexus on Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity. The executive summary of this document was shared with delegations in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.2. The full publication will be available after the UNECE Commission Session of 20-21 April 2021. UN/CEFACT is well positioned in this publication and further use of UN/CEFACT tools is an integral part of the recommendations.

12. The delegation of Ukraine commended Director Tuerk, the secretariat and the Regional Advisor for their work and the launch of a pilot project on dematerialization along a Baltic Sea – Dnieper – Black Sea – Danube transport corridor. This use case demonstrates the effectiveness of the application of UN/CEFACT standards in multimodal transport. Ukraine has also been able to continue the work of the National Trade Facilitation Body in a new format with the assistance of the secretariat.

Plenary decision 21-04: The Plenary took note of the reports under matters arising and requested that the secretariat report on matters arising at the next Plenary session in 2022.

V. Bureau overview of developments (Agenda Item 4)

13. The Bureau reported on its new structure following the elections of Bureau Vice Chairs in June 2020 and the current developments within UN/CEFACT as outlined in documents ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/4 and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/4/Add.1. There are now four Programme Development Areas (PDAs). Eighteen Domain Coordinators were nominated in July 2020; one domain coordinator retired in February 2021 and two coordinators were nominated to fulfil the remaining mandate. There were sixteen Bureau calls during this period and 102 decisions. UN/CEFACT was officially represented in fifty-eight events. One Vice Chair has needed to step down temporarily and the Bureau asked the former Vice Chair covering this area to temporarily take over as an “Acting Vice Chair”.

14. The two Vice Chairs in charge of the International Trade Procedures PDA reported on:

- The completion of three trade facilitation recommendations and the update of two code list recommendation;
- The potential future work being considered (guidance on private sector involvement in trade facilitation measures; a revision of Recommendation 18 on *Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures*, an assessment methodology for Single Window effectiveness and guidance on the relation between Single Window and advanced technologies).

15. The three Vice Chairs in charge of the International Supply Chain PDA reported on:

- The completion of one trade facilitation recommendation, one white paper and a series of e-business standards;
- The current active projects which include one in the Accounting and Audit Domain, four in the Supply Chain Management and Procurement Domain, three in the Transport and Logistics Domain, two in the Travel and Tourism Domain and one each in the Accounting and Audit Domain, in the Finance and Payment Domain and in the Insurance Domain; and
- The potential future work being considered (sector-specific implementations of the Reference Data Models).

16. The two Vice Chairs in charge of the Regulatory / e-Government PDA reported on:

- The completion of one recommendation and two e-business standards;
- The current active projects which include four in the e-Data Management Domain, two in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Agri-food Domain, one in the Cross-Border Management Domain and one in the Environment Domain; and
- The potential future work being considered (artificial intelligence in trade facilitation, information security guidelines, electronic notarization, guidelines for standards-

based information and communication technology, digital corridors for landlocked countries and blockchain-based authorized economic operator mutual recognition).

17. The Vice Chair in charge of the Methodology and Technology PDA reported on:
 - The timely completion of all libraries and directories, one guideline and two e-business standards;
 - The current active projects which include two guidance document projects, and
 - The potential future work being considered (a technical specification for application programming interface [API] development as a UN/CEFACT deliverable).
18. The delegation of the Netherlands stressed the importance to document data and statistics of impact and use case of UN/CEFACT standards to better showcase the work for all member States and permanent missions.
19. The delegation of Ukraine noted the value of UN/CEFACT e-business standards, specifically those for e-business in international trade, transport and freight forwarding as they help reduce human contacts in order to address the current pandemic situation. Ukraine is using and developing these standards as part of the Baltic Sea – Dnieper – Black Sea – Danube transport corridor project linking Ukraine to many neighbouring partner countries.

Plenary decision 21-05: The Plenary took note of the Bureau overview of recent developments and requested that the Bureau report on developments again in 2022.

VI. Reports of rapporteurs (Agenda Item 5)

20. The Regional Rapporteurs presented their report contained in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/5.

- (a) The Rapporteur for the Sub-Saharan Africa region reported on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the planned events in the region (most have been cancelled). Several webinars have been organized to maintain the activities of associations, specifically one of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AAEC) on how Single Window has helped to face the pandemic. Discussions on an African e-health passport have been launched. Work progresses in the region to develop a dematerialized certificate of origin which is a key priority of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA); the Western African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) has approved the pilot on this topic. He underlined the importance of the Trade Information Portal which has been identified as an important instrument for the African region.
- (b) The Rapporteur for the Asia-Pacific region reported that the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT) studied the relation between e-commerce platforms and customs procedures / documentation. Awards were presented over the past year to solutions in the region that demonstrate ways to simplify and streamline trade procedures with digitalization and with strong linkages to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. It was further reported that the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) developed an interactive guide to support countries to conduct self-assessments of legal and technical readiness on cross-border paperless trade. The ESCAP “Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific” entered into force on 20 February 2021; the report underlined the progress on the ratification of this agreement.
- (c) The Rapporteur for the Middle East and Northern Africa region did not present a report.

Plenary decision 21-06: The Plenary took note of the reports of the UN/CEFACT Regional Rapporteurs for Sub-Saharan Africa and for Asia-Pacific and requested that reports be provided at the next Plenary session in 2022.

VII. Recommendations and standards (Agenda Item 6)

21. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/6, *Recommendation No. 38: Trade Information Portals*, submitted to the Plenary for approval. This document provides guidance on how to set up such a portal, what information should be shared and the governance of these facilities that compile and publish the cross-border regulatory requirements. It was underlined that this project is scheduled to continue in order to propose an e-business standard linked to such facilities. The Chair thanked the Project Leader and the project team for their continued hard work.

22. The delegation of the Russian Federation underlined that it would consider this recommendation as it updates its existing trade portal. It encouraged the project team to finalize the e-business standard work quickly so that it may be included in the national review process.

Plenary decision 21-07: The Plenary approved UNECE *Recommendation No. 38: Trade Information Portals* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/6).

23. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/7, *Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief*, submitted to the Plenary for approval. The recommendation provides key considerations and practices for implementing preparedness measures for the facilitation of a large influx of humanitarian relief after a natural disaster. It focuses on the import, transit and temporary admission measures for the movement of relief goods and equipment within the first fifteen days following the sudden onset of a natural disaster. The Chair thanked the Project Leader, the project team as well as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other participating agencies for their hard work.

Plenary decision 21-08: The Plenary approved UNECE *Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/7).

24. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/8, *Recommendation No. 45: Minimum Standards for Ship Agents and Ship Brokers*, submitted to the Plenary for approval. This recommendation is an updated version of a 1988 recommendation published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It provides guidance and minimum standards for the professions of ship agent and ship broker and may serve as a baseline for governments and providers of ship agency and ship broking services. The Chair thanked the Project Leader and project team for their hard work.

Plenary decision 21-09: The Plenary approved UNECE *Recommendation No. 45: Minimum Standards for Ship Agents and Ship Brokers* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/8).

25. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/9, *Recommendation No. 47: Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response*, submitted to the Plenary for approval. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, some of the measures put in place to reduce the spread of the disease have had an adverse effect on trade flows and could potentially leave a lasting scar on the global economy. This recommendation outlines measures to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on trade flows. The Chair thanked the Project Leader, the project team as well as UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre for their hard work.

26. The delegation of the Russian Federation thanked UN/CEFACT for the valuable work presented in agenda item six. It noted that the proposed Recommendation No. 47 is a comprehensive deliverable with systemic measures and applauded the speed with which this project had been completed.

Plenary decision 21-10: The Plenary approved UNECE *Recommendation No. 47: Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/9).

27. The secretariat presented the deliverables in support of the circular economy in agenda item 6b:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/10, *Recommendation No. 46: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* was submitted to the Plenary for approval. It establishes a mechanism enabling governments and industry actors to make risk-informed decisions, overcome information asymmetry, communicate, and achieve accountability for sustainability claims, providing a set of internationally agreed practices for the harmonized collection and transmission of data for tracking and tracing materials, products and processes across the entire value chain.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/6/Rev.1, *Call to Action for Recommendation No. 46* was submitted to the Plenary for endorsement. This call to action was supported by the Plenary at its twenty-sixth session. This revision provides a final version following the finalization of the Recommendation; there were some minor changes in terminology and a minor change in the template based on input during the Public Review period of the Recommendation. This call to action invites actors in the garment and footwear industry to take action to accelerate sustainability and circularity of value chains in the industry.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/11, *Executive Summary for Policymakers: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* and Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.3, *Report – Enhancing Sustainability and Circularity in the Garment and Footwear Sector: Policy Developments on Traceability and Transparency* were presented to the Plenary for information. These documents provide the results of an analysis of policies, regulations, guidelines and initiatives on the subject. The executive summary provides a summary of the key findings.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/12, *Policy Brief – Harnessing the Potential of Blockchain Technology for Due Diligence and Sustainability in Cotton Value Chains* was presented to the Plenary for information.
- The Chair thanked the Project Leader and project team for their hard work. The Chair invited delegations to encourage their constituencies to submit their commitments to action using the template annexed to the call to action.

28. The delegation of the Netherlands welcomed this work and noted that production of traded goods from raw materials to final goods requires collaboration across the world and recalled the complexity of value chains and the need to track back to the components of products. It also stressed that improved traceability about the how, where, by whom and when products are made, can drive progress towards circularity and greater sustainability. It further observed that synergies appear to exist between this project and the work of the Transport and Logistics Domain on traceability.

29. The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed its full support to the proposed Recommendation No. 46 and the related Call to Action. It noted the importance of international standards for advancing traceability and transparency of value chains and further suggested to expand this work to other sectors such as pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.

30. The delegation of the European Union supports the proposed Recommendation No. 46 and the related Call to Action. It hopes that many partners will join this Call.

Plenary decision 21-11: The Plenary approved UNECE *Recommendation No. 46: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/10).

Plenary decision 21-12: The Plenary endorsed the *Call to Action for Recommendation No. 46: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/6/Rev.1).

Plenary decision 21-13: The Plenary took note of the *Executive Summary for Policymakers: Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/11), the *Report – Enhancing*

Sustainability and Circularity in the Garment and Footwear Sector: Policy Developments on Traceability and Transparency (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.3) and the *Policy Brief – Harnessing the Potential of Blockchain Technology for Due Diligence and Sustainability in Cotton Value Chains* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/12).

31. The Chair announced that, since the last Plenary, and according to agreed procedures, the secretariat had issued:

- Versions D.20A and D.20B of UN/EDIFACT
- Releases 2020-1 and 2020-2 of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Directories
- Releases D.20A and D.20B of the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library
- Releases D.20A and D.20B of the UN/CEFACT XML schema library
- Version 1.0 of the International Forwarding and Transport e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Cross-Industry Export Packing List e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Traceability and Transparency in Textile and Leather, Part 1: High-Level Process and Data Model e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Traceability and Transparency in Textile and Leather, Part 2: Use Cases and CCBDA Data Structures e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Transport and Logistics Modal Specific (rail, maritime, inland waterway) e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Exchange Header Envelope (XHE) technical specification
- Version 1.0 of the Cross-Domain Application Error and Acknowledgement e-business standard
- Version 1.0 of the Message Construction Guideline for Core Component Business Document Assembly
- Version 1.0 of the Implementation Guide for UN/CEFACT eCERT Standard for Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Measures
- Annex II (Code elements listed by units of measure name) and Annex III (Code elements listed by common code) of UNECE Recommendation No. 20: Codes for Units of Measure Used in International Trade
- The Annex of UNECE Recommendation No. 23: Freight Cost Code – FCC Harmonization of the Description of Freight Costs and Other Charges
- The Chair expressed her appreciation to the technical and e-business expert teams that develop and maintain these standards and technical specifications.

32. The delegation of the Russian Federation noted the importance of UN/CEFACT e-business standards for the Russian business community and called upon UN/CEFACT to focus on business-to-government standards in cooperation with relevant international organizations.

Plenary decision 21-14: The Plenary took note of the standards and technical specifications presented by the Chair and requested that they continue to be updated on a regular basis.

33. The Chair presented document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/13, *Call to Action for Improved Digitalization Through the Use of UN/CEFACT Standards*, submitted to the Plenary for endorsement. This call to action draws on the experience of over fifty years of development work, both within UN/CEFACT and by its predecessors, and concerns all UN/CEFACT deliverables. This call to action invites actors in electronic data exchange to take action to enhance interoperability, data quality and potentially enhance integration within a country, region, organization or among business partners. The Chair invited

delegations to encourage their constituencies to submit their commitments to action using the annexed template.

34. The delegation of Spain congratulated UN/CEFACT on the initiative of the Call to Action on Digitalization. This will enable the collection of feedback on how UN/CEFACT standards are being used and their benefits.

Plenary decision 21-15: The Plenary endorsed the *Call to Action for Improved Digitalization Through the Use of UN/CEFACT Standards* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/13).

35. The secretariat presented the other implementation support material in agenda item 6d:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.4, *White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace for Multi-Modal Transportation* was presented to the Plenary for noting. This document outlines the standards necessary for supporting digitized track and trace for any single or multimodal transportation scenario. It attempts to bridge gaps that exist in identification schemes used to identify consignment movements and commercial systems. This project will continue to develop relevant e-business standards in this area.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/14, *Executive Guides in Support of UN/CEFACT Deliverables* was presented to the Plenary for noting. This document proposes three executive guides on the topics of: Trade Information Portals, the cross industry family of supply chain standards and the transport and logistics standards in support of COVID-19 recovery. This is a continuation of plenary decision 16-08 to better disseminate the work of UN/CEFACT to high-level decision makers and policymakers through executive guides.
- The Chair thanked the relevant Project Leaders and project teams for their hard work.

36. The delegation of Australia thanked UN/CEFACT for its work in general and specifically on the White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace. This document fully supports the work of Australia in logistics efficiency especially for return of empty containers to avoid congestion in trade hubs.

37. The delegation of GS1 supports the Integrated Track and Trace White Paper. It looks forward to the next steps of the project and especially the links between the different levels of identification of the logistics and trade items.

Plenary decision 21-16: The Plenary took note of the *White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace for Multi-Modal Transportation* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.4) and the *Executive Guides in Support of UN/CEFACT Deliverables* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/14).

38. The secretariat presented the documents related to support to capacity building and technical cooperation:

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.5, *Training Material on the Implementation of Single Window* and document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.6, *Training Material on the Use of International Standards* and document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.7, *Training Material on National Trade Facilitation Bodies* were submitted to the Plenary for information. These documents were developed in the framework of an extra budgetary project which aimed to assist countries to implement the requirements of the WTO TFA, especially for these topics directly related to deliverables of UN/CEFACT.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.8, *Guide for National Trade Facilitation Bodies on How to Use UN/CEFACT Standards and Tools* was presented to the Plenary for information. This guide was developed under a UNDA inter-agency project in order to help these bodies to reuse the standards, guidance and recommendations developed by UN/CEFACT in an aim to improve trade facilitation and digitalization in general.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/15, *Regional Report on Post-Pandemic COVID-19 Economic Recovery: E-Commerce and Trade Facilitation* was presented

to the Plenary for information. This report, part of an UNCTAD-led inter agency project, identifies key challenges faced by countries in the UNECE region and the role of trade facilitation in enhancing e-commerce.

- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/16, *Trade Facilitation Roadmap of the Kyrgyz Republic 2021-2025* was presented to the Plenary for information.
- Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.9, *Meeting report of the Forty-Second Session of the Electronic Business Memorandum of Understanding Management Group Meeting of 9-10 December 2020* was presented to the Plenary for information. The UNECE served as secretary of this group throughout 2020. This Management Group brings together the major standards development organizations (SDO) in an effort to avoid overlaps and ensure interoperability. UNECE provided ten reports from each of the relevant substantive domains which were noted. The oldest standing resolution of this group encourages other SDOs to submit their core components to the UN/CEFACT library maintenance in order to encourage semantic harmonization.
- The Chair thanked the secretariat for these tools and reports.

Plenary decision 21-17: The Plenary took note of the capacity building and technical cooperation documents.

VIII. UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures (Agenda Item 7)

39. The Bureau prepared a new programme of work for the period 2021-2022 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/17). The Chair underlined that this document was prepared in consultation with all UN/CEFACT experts and is based, like the previous ones, on the UN/CEFACT strategy document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1). UN/CEFACT plans to continue the core activities including work on new technologies and has been enhanced to include key themes on sustainability and circularity.

Plenary decision 21-18: The Plenary approved the programme of work for the period 2021-2022, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/17.

IX. Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies (Agenda Item 8)

40. The Chair of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies presented the work of the group over the past period as presented in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/INF.10 as well as the report from the second annual meeting in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/18. He also presented a document on artificial intelligence in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/19.

41. The delegation of the European Union thanked the Chair of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies in Trade and Logistics. It recommended that the term “advanced technologies” may be broad and the Advisory Group should focus on the work of UN/CEFACT. With the adoption of circular economy as a key priority for UNECE in the next years, and circular economy being a key pillar of the European Green Deal, they proposed that the Advisory Group focus in particular on solutions supporting circularity. Further information about the EU priorities concerning advanced technologies can be also found in the EU Digital Compass for 2030.

Plenary decision 21-19: The Plenary endorsed the report of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies at its second session (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/18).

Plenary decision 21-20: The Plenary took note of the reports and overview of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies.

X. Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (Agenda Item 9)

42. The Chair of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) presented the work of the group over the past period, as presented in the document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/20 as well as the use case of UN/LOCODE for the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) which helps combat of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on life below water in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/21.

43. A comment was made outlining the importance of the network of national Focal Points which is very important for the processing of UN/LOCODE entries. It is important that these Focal Points actively participate in the meetings of the group. It was further noted that the participation of the private sector is essential for the adoption of this standard. The UN/CEFACT Chair called on delegates to nominate Focal Points and to ensure their active participation.

Plenary decision 21-21: The Plenary endorsed the report of the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/20).

Plenary decision 21-22: The Plenary took note of the use case reported to the Advisory Group on the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations.

XI. Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries / Sustainable Value Chains (Agenda Item 10)

44. The secretariat presented the work of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries over the past period, presented in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/22. Then, following up on plenary decision 20-05, it presented a proposed Mandate and Terms of Reference to broaden the scope of the Team of Specialists to cover other sustainable value chains, outlined in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/23.

45. The delegate of the European Union repeated its support for the broadening of the scope of the Team of Specialists' work and welcomes the reference to traceability with regard to environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, as this provides clarity on the scope of the work.

Plenary decision 21-23: The Plenary took note of the report of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries.

Plenary decision 21-24: The Plenary approved the Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in the Circular Economy for a two-year period, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/23.

XII. Activities of other United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and international organizations of interest to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (Agenda Item 11)

46. The secretariat invited three organizational units to join and highlight areas for current and potential future cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

(a) The UNECE Sustainable Transport Division underlined:

- The effective collaboration between several sections of the Sustainable Transport Division and the Trade Facilitation Section notably within the context of the Nexus work of the UNECE noted above;

- The usefulness of the e-business standards developed by UN/CEFACT in support of the conventions and programs of the Sustainable Transport Division, notably the eCMR and the ongoing work on dangerous goods; and
- The ongoing work on COVID-19 response.

(b) The CITES Secretariat recalled the scope of its work and the risk that illegal trade exploits gaps in control systems. It further noted:

- The role that electronic procedures and information exchange play to support automated risk management and targeted inspections as well as the benefits such systems can have for the issuance, control and exchange of permits;
- The usefulness of UN/CEFACT tools such as Recommendation 14 on electronic signatures and the semantic data standards; and
- Its participation in the joint UNECE/ESCAP Task Force on electronic permit information exchange.

(c) The Commodities Branch of UNCTAD underlined:

- That there is an increasing demand for transparency of value chains as a pre-condition for accountability and good governance;
- That this required visibility of value chains, as consumers need to know the origin of the products they buy, the conditions under which they were produced and the ecological footprint of their supply chains;
- That technologies play an important role to provide this information, but the digital divide needs to be addressed through collaboration between commodities dependent developing countries (CDDCs) and developed economies; and
- That collaboration with other UN agencies and in particular UN/CEFACT is important for technology transfer to address this gap.

47. The delegation of Ukraine thanked the Sustainable Transport Division for their very pertinent work and for the fruitful cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

48. The delegation of the Netherlands thanked CITES for its presentation and enquired about plans for electronic permit exchange with ePhyto and the EU TRACES hubs. CITES responded that the initial exchange is based on point to point exchanges, but Parties are also considering exchanges using hubs.

XIII. Future challenges in trade facilitation and electronic business (Agenda item 12)

49. This item was deferred to the next Plenary because of time constraints due to the on-line format of the meeting.

XIV. Other business (Agenda Item 13)

50. No other business points were raised.

XV. Adoption of decisions and draft report of the twenty-seventh session (Agenda Item 14)

Plenary decision 21-25: The Plenary approved the report and decisions of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) on its twenty-seventh session, document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/2 which, as per UNECE Executive Committee decision, will be subject to a silence procedure in the event of technical connection difficulties of member State representatives.