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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

Executive Committee

**Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business**

## **Recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> UNECE International Conference on Single Window of 30-31 October 2017, Geneva, Switzerland**

### *Summary*

The secretariat with the support of the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) organized the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Single Window on 30 and 31 October 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The event was attended by nearly 100 delegates from around 35 countries, 2 regional unions and over 10 international organizations. It resulted in the attached recommendations on the way forward concerning the Single Window guidance provided by the UNECE Trade Facilitation Section and UN/CEFACT.

## **Recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> UNECE International Conference on Single Window**

*Participants to the 4<sup>th</sup> UNECE International Conference on Single Window of 30 and 31 October 2017:*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, of 25 September 2015, and its call for an open, rule-based, transparent and equitable trading system, for inclusive economic growth,

*Recognizing* the importance of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation under the mandate of the WTO Doha Ministerial Declaration, and its provision mandating that “WTO Members shall endeavour to establish or maintain a Single Window through a single entry point” (article 10.4),

*Recognizing* that within many developing countries and countries in transition, the Single Window has been a success story, as it has effectively contributed to enhance the transparency of trading regulations and to facilitate import and export procedures, and that its successful implementation generally focus more on change management rather than the adoption of technical solutions,

*Noting* that the establishment of Single Window is especially important for least developed and landlocked economies as they provide enhanced opportunities for access to regional and global supply chains and markets, and acknowledging that such economies are in particular need for technical and financial support to this end,

*Noting* that the different levels of Single Window implementation affect the business community and the competitiveness of national and global enterprises,

Furthermore, *noting with concern* the diversity of Single Window globally that directly affects the competitive advantages of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in developed and developing countries,

*Recognizing* therefore the importance of facilitating trade through solutions such as Single Window for the direct achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 17 on partnership, 8 on decent work and economic growth and 10 on reduced inequalities, and indirectly of SDGs 1 on poverty eradication, 13 on climate action and 15 on the protection of life on land,

*Underlining* that information and communications technology and the digital economy have an increasing impact on global trade and development, including on the organization of work, employment and productivity, and environmental sustainability, and that the emergence of new technologies (Blockchain, cloud computing, data pipelines, event-driven data exchange, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Social Media, etc.) provide additional opportunities for exploring new information sharing concepts in global trade, including for the implementation of Single Window solutions,

*Recalling* the UNECE Single Window Recommendations developed by its United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT): Recommendation 33 “Single Window Recommendation” (ECE/TRADE/352), Recommendation 34 “Data Simplification and Standardization for International Trade” (ECE/TRADE/400), Recommendation 35 “Establishing a Legal Framework for International Trade Single Window” (ECE/TRADE/401) and Recommendation 36 “Single Window Interoperability” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/6), and supporting e-business standards and guidelines,

*Taking note with appreciation* of the recent work undertaken by UNECE, with its UN/CEFACT, including the Recommendation 42 “Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/8/Rev.1), Guide for Drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap (ECE/TRADE/420), the Technical Note on Terminology (ECE/TRACE/C/CEFACT/2017/10), and the update of its Single Window Repository,

*Taking further note with appreciation* of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (<http://tfig.unece.org/>) and the important impact this has in the global trade facilitation community,

*Underlining* the large number of countries and international organizations that refer to such UNECE and UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and guidelines on Single Window implementation – including but not limited to UNCTAD, the UN Regional Commissions, the World Customs Organization, the World Trade Organization, the International Trade

Centre, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Air Transport Association, the African Alliance for E-Commerce, the Pan Asian e-Commerce Alliance, regional entities - such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and its member states, and the Eurasian Economic Union and its members, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and countries - such as Albania, Canada, Costa Rica, Iran, Senegal, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine,

*Acknowledging* the variation of interpretation and implementation of UNECE Recommendation 33 on Single Window Implementation, by various organizations and governments across the world,

*Stressing* the need for updated clear and coherent guidance for the implementation of Single Windows that could support greater economic development, and reduce inequalities within and between countries,

*Welcoming* the written and oral contributions from participants that enriched the debate during the 2017 UNECE International Single Window Conference,

1. *Encourage* Member States to further develop their Single Window based on the guidance of UNECE and UN/CEFACT Recommendations and Standards,

2. *Explore the possibility* of establishing a UNECE-UN/CEFACT convention / framework agreement on cross-border e-Trade,

3. Taking note of the tools developed by UNECE mentioned above, as well as other tools such as the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, requests the UNECE secretariat to *continue to maintain and enhance* these tools, and *invite* development partners, in a position to do so, to provide UNECE with the necessary funds to cover such maintenance and enhancement,

4. *Request* Member States and relevant international organizations to cooperate with the UNECE secretariat during the update of the UNECE Single Window Repository,

5. Recognizing the importance of e-Commerce platforms, encourage UN/CEFACT to *continue* its work on Single Submission Portal to support private sector initiatives which can advance the facilitation of border crossing and look into the needs to revise Recommendation 32 “E-Commerce Self-Regulatory Instruments (Code of Conduct)” (ECE/TRADE/277),

6. *Request* the UNECE to work in close cooperation with the World Trade Organization to explore the modalities for UN/CEFACT policy recommendations, standards and tools to support the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and ensure they are promoted at the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee,

7. *Emphasize* the need to provide the necessary technical and financial support to developing and least developed countries to advance the implementation of their Single Window,

8. *Invite* UN/CEFACT to revise the UNECE Recommendation 33 taking into consideration the following elements:

- *integrate* the findings of the Technical Note on Terminology for Single Window and other electronic platforms (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/10),
- *consider* the use of the term of “Single Window Environment” in the recommendation in order to take into account the diversity and complexity of systems contributing to the Single Window concept,
- *revise* section 3 of the recommendation covering scenarios of “common models” in order to include new data sources such as Internet of Things, Electronic Document Management System, Event Driven Data, Application Programming Interfaces;
- *update* Annex C on the “Key components of the Feasibility Studies” in order to consider new technologies such as Cloud Computing, Web Services, eSecurity, Exchange Standards (such as Reference Data Models), Data Processing Methods,
- *update* Annex D on “Tools Available to Assist in Implementing a Single Window” in order to reference Recommendation 8 “Unique Identification Code Methodology – UNIC” (TRADE/WP.4/INF.119), Recommendation 14 “Authentication of Trade Documents” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2014/6), Recommendations 34, 35, 36, Recommendation 40 “Consultation Approaches Best Practices in Trade and

Government Consultation on Trade Facilitation Matters” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2015/9/Rev.1) , Recommendation 42 and the Blockchain White Papers (UN/CEFACT project p1049), the Project on Core Principles (UN/CEFACT project p1041) as well as any other pertinent UN/CEFACT deliverable,

- *take into consideration* Regional Single Window (RSW) as a possibility in regional processes, with different models which could be proposed for different levels of economic integration each with their own benefits and obstacles,
- *further develop* the chapter 4 “What are the benefits of Establishing a Single Window?” in order to outline the expected outcomes of Single Window implementation in order to include some of the performance indicators,
- *develop* a new chapter on Key Performance Indicators and measuring the effectiveness of Single Window implementation with their methodologies (i.e. Vulnerability to cyber threats, data security and aspects developed within Recommendation 14) – these could ultimately be built directly into the Single Window system as well as be run as a regular external audit;
- *take into consideration* the needs of training and of education of Human Resources in relation to Single Window implementation,
- *emphasize* the importance of change and transition management,
- *consider* expanding the recommendation in order to take into account regional trade agreements with multiple layers of legislation / operations,
- *consider* the evolution of the recommendation in view of links and synergies between multiple domains such as transport and customs (e.g. re-use of data among those two domains),
- *address* the issue of multiple single windows within a same economy,
- *consider* the evolution of the recommendation’s reference to “single entry point” in order to take into account the different roles of economic operators at the border (e.g. carrier, freight forwarder, customs declarant, etc.) which require different entry points as well as the legacy and complexity of Single Window set-up, in particular at a regional level as outlined in the Technical Note on Terminology for Single Window and other electronic platforms,

9. *Welcome the participation* of governments, governmental agencies, regional unions, civil society, business representatives, international organizations and academia in this development, and *invite them to join the work* within UN/CEFACT to this end, and *emphasize the need to engage* key stakeholders at the international, regional and national level, in the revision of a Recommendation 33,

10. *Request* the UNECE secretariat to organize a Single Window Conference in 2018 to take stock of development, report on the progress of the UN/CEFACT Single Window Working Group and provide further guidance,

11. *Request* the UNECE secretariat to organize a conference aimed to review the inter-relationship between e-Document initiatives such as eTIR, eCMR, eCITES, ePhyto, eCert and eventually provide further guidance on this topic, including in connection with the implementation of Single Window.