

# **Report on the UNECE International Conference on future directions for Single Window**

October 30 and 31, 2017  
Geneva, Switzerland

## **Background**

UNECE and UN/CEFACT began developing guidance material on the concept of Single Window about twenty years ago. In the early 2000's, Recommendation 33 on Implementing a Single Window was developed and has been a reference on the definition and base principles ever since.

Recommendation 34 on Data Simplification and Standardization and Recommendation 35 on the Legally Enabling Environment soon followed and have recently been completed with Recommendation 36 on Single Window Interoperability.

Single Window is today a major buzz work in cross-border trade and trade facilitation measures. It is cited as one of the obligations of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement, raising awareness and encouraging countries to establish such solutions. Guidance material is being developed on every continent and by multiple agencies.

Today more and more systems are naming themselves Single Windows even if they do not satisfy all aspects of the UNECE Recommendation 33 definition, bringing confusion to the trading community and encouraging UN/CEFACT to develop its Technical Note on Terminology linked to Single Window and Similar Platforms.

This conference aimed to take stock of some variations of Single Window implementations and how they align to the UNECE Recommendation 33 definition. This will especially entail underlining that Single Window is a vehicle for trade facilitation measures and not simply a computer system.

- It will aim to study the concrete next steps for Single Window evolution.
- It will put forward the probable key deliverables to be implemented in the next five years.
- It will set the path towards a Single Window Symposium.
- And of course, it will explain the link to the WTO-Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and all of the TFA measures that SW could help enable.

The conference was organized by UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT.

## **Messages and views presented**

### Welcome Address

1. Mrs. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary, referred to article 10.4 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and stated that the Single Window is essential for business and trade, and is supposed to coordinate between cross border agencies, to sustain interoperability. She expressed her wish that Recommendation 33 will be updated by the outcome of this conference, including new technologies like Blockchain.
2. His Excellency Alvaro Cedeno, Ambassador of Costa Rica, emphasized the need to look to the future (of digitalization), and link this to the past to capture the challenges and enable the transition. He also called to embrace the new technologies and to use them as accelerators to further improve the Single Window (update Rec. 33!) for trade facilitation, referring to Thomas L.

Friedman's suggestions in his book 'Thank you for being late'. He also made a link between transport efficiency, resulting from trade facilitation, and the reduction of emissions from GHG<sup>1</sup>.

3. Mrs. Maria Ceccarelli, UNECE Chief of Trade Facilitation Section, also recommended to update Rec. 33, with a view to include not only new technologies, but also to review its terminology for Single Window and other collaborative electronic platforms.

#### Keynote session: Placing Single Window in today's perspective

4. Mr. Lance Thompson, UNECE, TF Section, Chief UN/CEFACT Support Unit, settled the objectives of the conference, with the aims to propose to revise Rec. 33, to draft a proposal for a new Recommendation, to advise the Executive Committee and to agree on a next Single Window Conference in 2018.
5. Mr. Tom Butterly, Director, TDAF Consulting (and former UNECE Chief of Trade Facilitation Section), gave an inside view on the evolution of Single Window over 15 years. He concluded the need for a Lead Agency – having the power, the integrity and the competence to lead the coordination between the stakeholders - for successfully establishing a Single Window. His view is that collaboration in a Single Window environment is essential, and expected in due time that the Single Window would be part of a complex network of interconnected systems. In his view, Port Community Systems work well, and these PCSs and Single Windows have to live together.
6. Mrs. Maria Ceccarelli, UNECE Chief of Trade Facilitation Section, argued that the Single Window – as trade facilitator - may contribute to the sustainable development goals of the UN.
7. Mr. Alejandro Gamboa-Alder, WTO, explained his views on how Single Window helps implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. He emphasized its contribution to reducing international trade- and transport costs, and to time-saving of transport.
8. Mrs. Lia Potec, EU DG-MOVE, addressed "Electronic Transport Documents" (for B2B), with a view to EU's Digital Single Market Strategy. She advocated intermodality and interconnectivity, and suggested to explore the possibilities for Single Window to facilitate intermodal transport and logistics.

#### Round Table 1: Variations of Single Window and Facilitating Trade

Moderator: Mr. Jan Hoffmann, UNCTAD, Chief of Trade Logistics Branch

9. Mr. Zahouani Saadaoui, EU DG TAXUD, discussed Regional Single Window development in the EU, in particular the Customs Single Window environment. He emphasized the need to adhere to international standards, to interconnect with existing Single Windows, and to include all stakeholders in the development process. The EU Customs Single Window will be implemented between 2020-2027. For this purpose, in 2019 new EU legislation will be introduced.
10. Mr. Joao Rodrigues Frade, EU DIGIT, introduced 'Single Window Building Blocks' within the EU, in order to better facilitate the re-use of data between Government agencies.
11. Mr. Aleksei Bondarenko, UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain Coordinator, explained the progress on Single Window in the Eurasian Economic Union (The Republic of Armenia, The Republic of Belarus, The Republic of Kazakhstan, The Kyrgyz Republic, and The Russian Federation).
12. Mr. Isidore Biyiha, Chair AAEC, explained the support from African Alliance of eCommerce to the implementation of Single Window in Africa.
13. Mr. Mario Apostolov, UNECE Regional Advisor, gave an impression of a successful implementation of a Single Window in the ECE Region: the Port Community System in Odessa which first transformed into a maritime Single Window, and finally into a National Single Window.

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<sup>1</sup> Green House Gases

14. Mr. Nasrollah Jahangard, Head of Iran ITO and Iran IT Council Leader, explained – as an example of eGovernment - the National Single Window in Iran.

#### Round Table 2: Evolution and Key deliverables in the next five years

Moderator: Mr. Jan Hoffmann, UNCTAD, Chief of Trade Logistics Branch

15. Mr. Ingmar Väli, highlighted Estonian's e-Governance best practices and cooperation with UN. He explained how the eGovernment state portal (called a Government Single Window) connects the people of Estonia with all kinds of digital services from Gov. See <https://www.eesti.ee/en/>
16. Mrs. Sue Probert, Vice Chair UN/CEFACT, talked about semantic data and process driven data exchange. She promoted once more UN/CEFACT's International Supply Chain Model Process Model, following the Buy-Ship-Pay principle. She explained the relationship between International Sales and Transport Service Contracts, and showed UN/CEFACT's steps taken to construct the UN/CEFACT Single Window Reference Data Models (Supply Chain RDM and Intermodal Transport RDM)
17. Mr. David Roff, Warrant Group, talked about the promises of the Data Pipeline concept. Although there are still some legal issues (as who is the reporting party here?) the concept itself is promising.
18. Mr. Philippe Salles (tbc), Traxens, introduced the 'smart container', as an enabler of 'fast lane clearance'.
19. Mr. Ibrahima Diagne, Gainde 2000, talked about Blockchain and Single Window. He reflected on certain Blockchain promises (integrity & security, smart compliance, cost reduction, and fast end-to-end transactions) and Single Window (next) challenges (global performance, global- and national interoperability, and more B2B in a Single Window environment)

#### Current and recent work in UN/CEFACT on Single Window

20. Mr. Lance Thompson, UNECE, TF Section, Chief UN/CEFACT Support Unit, referred once more to the Technical Note on Terminology for Single Window and other electronic platforms.
21. Mr. Aleksei Bondarenko, UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain Coordinator, talked about Core Principles in Operations of Single Window"
22. Mr. Ibrahima Diagne, Gainde 2000, introduced the Single Submission Portal project. He emphasized that the future of Single Window is more in B2B support. He also expected that Blockchain still has a long way to go.

#### Questions and Discussions

Brainstorming; Group discussion on key themes related to Single Window.

Session moderated by:

Mrs. Sue Probert, UN/CEFACT Vice Chair: *Future technology trends.*

Mr. Giuseppe Di Capua, UNCTAD, ASYCUDA: *Concerns with Single Window Implementation.*

Mr. Aleksei Bondarenko, UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain Coordinator: *Towards Regional Integration.*

Mr. Armen Manukyan, WCO Technical Attaché, *Monitoring Single Window Performance.*

#### Presentations

See <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46572>

## **RESULT**

Recommendations of the 4th UNECE International Conference on Single Window of 30-31 October 2017, Geneva, Switzerland

*Participants to the 4th 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.

Next SW Conference is in 2018, on November 22 and 23 in Palais des Nations in Geneva.

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