



PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

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of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

UN/CEFACT Forum Opening Session

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Salle XXIII

Acting Chair, Mr. Tahseen Khan,
Vice Chairs,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are happy to see you all gathered here at the Palais des Nations, a building that is truly a symbol for our discussions today. The Palais is the heart of what we call “International Geneva”, a unique platform where every day, decisions are made to save and improve the lives of millions of people all around the world.

Much of this work does not make media headlines – and yet it continues to contribute to solving the most critical and challenging governance issues facing humanity today. This is also true for what your group has been doing for over forty years.

The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, UN/CEFACT, has developed key standards that have contributed to streamlining international trade. These include

- the Cross-Industry-Invoice, which has been adopted as an obligatory standard for invoicing by public authorities across the EU;
 - the messages for Rapid Alert for the Safety of Food and Feed, which have been used to recall food products such as the contaminated eggs last August;
 - the UN/EDIFACT messages, which, in the transport industry alone, represent 32 messages per second, 115,000 messages per hour, and 1 billion messages per year. One example I find particularly impressive: The B.A.P.L.I.E message (that shows the location of all containers on
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board a ship) replaces some 500 pieces of paper for container and each time it arrives in a port;

- the code lists which are used throughout the industry by almost all major standards organizations and trading countries;
- recommendations such as number 33 on establishing National Single Windows to streamline cross-border trade flows or number 4 on establishing National Trade Facilitation Bodies.

UN/CEFACT's contributions may not take the timeline, but they certainly help trade move better.

Geneva is also about partnership and collaboration. It is home to 37 international organizations but also close to 380 NGOs headquartered here. Together with the Permanent Missions, more than 30,000 people in Geneva are working to collaboratively to promote rules-based solutions that support the 2030 Agenda. Working in partnership on international standard-setting will allow each of us to work more effectively and do our part towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Your work this week and in the months and years to come will also contribute. Among others, you can help to implement the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement, which is SDG Target 17.10. You can help improve the export and trading environment in developing countries, that is SDG Target 17.11. And you can contribute to public and private partnerships to achieve these goals, which is SDG target 17.17.

And here we see the importance of collaboration. All of you working together, those from public administrations, from the private sector, even sometimes from competing companies - all working towards the greater good of sustainable trade and development.

UN/CEFACT has a strong potential for helping all countries and companies access effective trade processes, keeping in mind that:

- standards can strengthen international cooperation and help achieve the SDGs and,
- collaboration between organizations and between the public and private sectors is key.

As you move forward in each of your domains, please keep in mind the goal to facilitate trade and collaboration. I ask you to give some thought to what standards are needed to further facilitate trade and support the 2030 Agenda. Think about any eventual gaps in UN/CEFACT's standards processes that are not yet standardized and to which you could contribute. Think about partnerships - of course among you all, but also with other parts of the UN, such as the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division, and other standards setting bodies with which we have a working relationship, like the International Organization for Standardization, the International Telecommunication Union, and the World Trade Organization. This is already the case in much of what you do, and I ask you to ensure that this continues.

During this Forum, you will be exploring some of the new and trendy technologies that are shaping the environment today, such as blockchain,

internet of things and e-commerce platforms. This shows the dedication of UN/CEFACT to evolving with technology, and its efforts to offer the most pertinent tools for today's environment.

Many countries and companies rely on the standards that you have developed over the years. Yes, many will be looking to evolve towards new technologies, but they will also need the current standards to be maintained and further developed. We have a rich list of deliverables which should continue, even if adaptations for new approaches are proposed. And, further, we need to ensure the interoperability of both past, present and future deliverables, as you have always striven to do.

Before I close, allow me to introduce you to Ms. Ivonne Higuero, the new Director of the Division of Economic Cooperation and Trade since 1 March. Please welcome her to the Division and the work of UN/CEFACT.

Welcome again to International Geneva. I wish you a fruitful and productive week of debates and new ideas, and good luck in your overall objective of progressing towards the SDGs with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Thank you.
