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**Meeting with the Chair of the Steering Committee
on Trade Capacity and Standards**

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

1. This report outlines the main achievements of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards in implementing its work programme for the period 2018–2019, as well as key developments related to the work of the Steering Committee through September 2018. More information is contained in the report of the Steering Committee's 4th session, which was held on 3–4 May 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland (ECE/CTCS/2018/2).

I. Achievements since the last session

Removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade

2. Since the last reporting to the Steering Committee, the UNECE has completed a national assessment study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Georgia. Preparations are also underway for a national assessment study in Serbia that is being undertaken upon the request of the Government. A national assessment study was also launched in Armenia and the UNECE has adapted implementation to take into account emerging needs as well as institutional changes resulting from Government restructuring.

3. All studies mentioned above used the UNECE expanded evaluation methodology that was developed at the request of the member States during the Steering Committee's 3rd session in April 2017. It captures the impact of non-tariff measures on the achievement of sustainable development goals 8 and 9.

4. To support member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Chair, in cooperation with the Bureau of the Steering Committee, initiated a review of activities under the Steering Committee in terms of their consistency with the level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its outcome was presented to member States during the 4th session of the Steering Committee in documents ECE/CTCS/2018/3 (Improving the Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards Delivery on the 2030 Agenda: Concept Note) and ECE/CTCS/2018/4 (Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards).

5. The Steering Committee decided to recommend to the EXCOM to approve the revised terms of reference, with the suggestions of the European Union and its member countries. The terms of reference incorporating these suggestions were published as an annex to the report of the 4th session of the Steering Committee (ECE/CTCS/2018/2). The proposals listed in ECE/CTCS/2018/3 are currently being elaborated by the Bureau under the leadership of the Chair and will be presented to member States during the 5th session of the Steering Committee, scheduled to be held on 9-10 May 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Developing and implementing agricultural quality standards

6. In 2017, the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) adopted 62 new or revised standards. This exceptionally high number is due to the revision of all fresh fruit and vegetables standards. At its 2018 meeting, the Working Party is considering 20 new or revised standards for adoption. To highlight the link between work on agricultural standards and guides and SDGs, the UNECE published a number of information posters.

7. The Working Party's focus on SDG12 (particularly target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030) involves an analysis of areas for intervention, including guidance and corrective measures. It also includes the development of a multi stakeholder guide of good practice in

agricultural supply chains as well as capacity-building activities that is being undertaken as a four-year inter-regional project in cooperation with the other Regional Commissions. It is expected that the Working Party's new work will have lasting impact and change key aspects in the production, sorting, packing, trade and sales of agricultural produce and benefit changes in the food system. More detailed measures of the impact of these activities will start to become available in 2019.

8. WP.7 has also increased its attention on food fraud and food integrity and strengthened labelling provisions. It published an online registry of listing code marks used by authorities worldwide to facilitate their verification on shipments of agricultural goods. The Working Party's work on the development of e-quality certificates will further strengthen these efforts and limit fraud in the attestation of quality of agricultural produce.

9. Since May 2018, WP.7 and its four Specialized Sections held the following meetings:

- Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (30 April – 2 May 2018);
- Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce (25–27 June 2018), including the first symposium on “Nuts and Dried Fruit for a Sustainable Future”, as well as an exhibition and tasting event of nuts and dried fruit from around the world, co-organized with FAO on 26 June 2018;
- Specialized Section on Meat (2–4 July 2018), including the fourth meat symposium on sustainable international e-trade for meat (2 July 2018).

10. Participation in the meetings of the Working Party and its Specialized Sections as well as the capacity-building events, conferences and symposia has further increased by over 20 per cent compared to the previous reporting period. Since 2012, UNECE and its WP.7 partners have trained close to 2,000 participants on the use and scope of UNECE standards and related inspection and trade procedures.

11. Member States participating in the work on agricultural quality standards continue to support the discussion on how UNECE could further address crosscutting issues such as eating quality, food waste, traceability and the links between environmental and agricultural issues. This work increases the sustainable impact of standards and related economic activities.

12. In line with the SDGs related to WP.7's work (particularly, SDGs 8, 12 and 17), UNECE has partnered in project and standard implementation work with several UN bodies, such as ITC, UNCTAD, FAO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the regional commissions and intensified its impact on the ground via the UN country teams including UNDP in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In addition, cooperation has been developed with other public and private international organizations, such as OECD working in areas covered by WP.7 work.

13. Further information on the activities and accomplishments of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards can be found in the WP.7 report on UNECE's website (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/2).

Promoting regulatory cooperation and internationally agreed standards

14. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) convened the 16th Meeting of the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS Group) at the International Electrotechnical Committee on 26–27 June 2018. The two-day session offered attendees a space to review regional and national best-practice models and discuss the creation of an effective system of enforcement over compliance with requirements of the Eurasian Economic Union technical regulations. The group agreed to enhance cooperation

with educational institutions, explore the possibility of providing online training for economic operators and strengthen contact between global and regional Market Surveillance Networks, encouraging them to participate in WP.6 activities.

15. The 5th annual meeting of International Organizations, co-hosted by WP.6, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) under the aegis of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) partnership, took place in Geneva, Switzerland on 12 April 2018. Attendees noted the development of the 2018 Survey on the rule-making practices of international organisations and confirmed the continuing significance of the initiative, as a platform for peer learning on international norms and standards. Participation in the meeting included 32 representatives of the partnership, selected academics (“Academic friends of the partnership”) and country delegates from the OECD regulatory policy committee.

16. The Comprehensive Approach of the UNECE Model L Regulation was presented at the 2018 International Conference on Equipment and Services in Explosive Atmospheres of the International Electrotechnical Commission Explosive in Jakarta, Indonesia (8–9 August 2018) Another key issue of discussion was the application of voluntary standards for sustainable development and the international model for transnational regulatory cooperation based on good regulatory practice.

17. In July 2018, WP.6 finalized the Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development and the Annex to the Declaration for adoption by the Steering Committee and the EXCOM. This declaration is the result of collaborative work by a number of different standards development organizations and gender experts. Going forward, the implementation of this Declaration will support the full and effective participation of women in standards-setting activities and gender sensitive standard-setting.

II. Major activities planned for the remainder of 2018 and beyond

18. The secretariat is preparing to undertake further studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, based on requests from member States. Below is a brief description of the planned activities by WP.6 and WP.7.

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

19. A side event on the “Standards for the SDGs” will be organized at the 41st General Assembly of ISO to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 26 September 2018. Its objective is to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, showcase the role of standards for the achievement of the SDGs and focus on practical approaches for using voluntary standards in this regard.

20. WP.6 will hold its first working meeting with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea regarding the SDGs on 9–12 October 2018 at the Icelandic Marine Research Institute, Reykjavik, Iceland. Policymakers and stakeholders will review concepts and discuss the distinct challenges associated with operationalizing ecosystem-based management, through the application of voluntary standards and regulatory measures.

21. The twenty-eighth session of WP.6 will be held in November 2018. It will review the contributions made by the Working Party over the past year to the implementation of the SDGs.

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

22. WP.7 will hold its seventy-fourth session on 12–14 November 2018 together with an international Conference on practical solutions to making food production and trade more

sustainable. The conference will be co-organized with other international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

23. WP.7 will strengthen its work on food loss prevention and reduction and the development of sustainable mitigating measures. Through its enhanced emphasis on quality, safe and nutritious food for all, WP.7 and its Specialized Sections will develop tools and international best practice to improve export and domestic markets. These new inclusive tools will also aim at improving the role of women farmers and traders in trade in agricultural produce and the creation of sustainable employment possibilities for youth. In collaboration with other partners, WP.7 will also focus more on the links between food production and trade and their environmental and economic impact to enable countries plan and implement more sustainable economic, production and consumption strategies for the future.

III. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

24. The Steering Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference as contained in the annex of document ECE/CTCS/2018/2) to better reflect its work on the Sustainable Development Goals, namely how the UNECE series on studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade can address the relevant SDGs. The revisions do not propose any amendments to the mandate of the Steering Committee and do not have financial implications.

25. The Steering Committee also endorsed the Programme of Work of WP.6, as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2017/6, and the proposed activities of WP. 7 for the period 2018, as contained in document CE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/2, paragraphs 48-51.

26. The Steering Committee recommended the above decisions to EXCOM for approval.

IV. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

Agricultural Quality Standards

27. WP.7 secretariat is actively collaborating with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in implementing a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade”.

IV. Technical cooperation activities

28. This section provides updates on the secretariat’s report on “capacity-building and technical assistance activities” (ECE/CTCS/2018/10). Further details can also be found in the secretariat’s report on “cooperation with other UNECE bodies and other organizations” (ECE/CTCS/2018/11).

Agricultural supply chains

29. In December 2017, UNECE finalized a UNDA-financed project entitled “Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains” implemented with ESCAP and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Codex Alimentarius Commission and bilateral donor agencies (with contributions in kind). The project received a very good external evaluation

and managed to achieve measurable impact on the ground. One of the target countries in the Central Asian region adopted a record number of 80 UNECE standards and is now in the implementation phase. Regional working groups established under the project are working on the ground with producers, traders, standardization agencies and government agencies to improve the quality of the food produced and improve its competitiveness on international markets.

30. Since January 2018, UNECE is leading another UNDA-financed project entitled “Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade”. It addresses, for the first time, the prevention and mitigation of post-harvest losses through, *inter alia*, better quality produce and provides analysis and training to address national issues in selected countries. The first workshop is scheduled to take place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in September 2018. Technical work under the project has already started and will benefit all UN members States.

Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan

31. As a follow-up to the UNECE study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Kyrgyzstan, UNECE is implementing a project for “Strengthening the National Capacity of Trade-Support Institutions” in the country, with a focus on risk management in business and regulation, conformity assessment and market surveillance.

32. Achievements to date include the preparation of a training guide on regulatory frameworks and market surveillance, and the organization of two capacity-building workshops (one in Bishkek and one in Osh over the period 22–29 May 2018) in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of Kyrgyzstan and UNDP. Participants represented the Ministry of Economy, the National Institute for Standards and Metrology, Kyrgyzstan State University and the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Follow-up on completed studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade

33. The recommendations of the UNECE study in Georgia (ECE/CTCS/2018/5) were adopted by the Government. UNECE is currently assisting the Government in implementing key recommendations for further improving trade facilitation conditions at major ports in collaboration with UNCTAD.

34. UNECE is also supporting the establishment of national trade facilitation committees in Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova within the context of a project led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). An extra-budgetary project “Removing Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan” will be completed by the end of October 2018.

35. UNECE is in the process of implementing a technical assistance project in Tajikistan to assist the recently established national trade facilitation committee in developing an action plan for trade facilitation and export diversification. The plan will inform public-private consultations on future reforms in the areas of trade facilitation and export diversification.

V. Cooperation with other organizations

36. The previous section highlighted several development partners, which UNECE has been collaborating with in delivering technical assistance and capacity building activities. This section provides a brief overview of UNECE’s cooperation with other organizations in implementing its core activities. Further details can be found in document ECE/CTCS/2018/11 “Cooperation with other organizations and Economic Commission for Europe bodies”.

World Trade Organization

37. Through WP.6, UNECE is a permanent observer at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). WP.6 participates in all the meetings of the WTO TBT and provides the TBT Committee members with updates on its activities and the emerging needs of UNECE member States with transition and developing economies.

Standardization Organizations

38. WP.6 collaborates closely with relevant organizations within the context of its “sectoral initiatives”, which advance practical ways to support across-the-board as well as sector-specific regulatory cooperation. In this context, the Working Party has established a partnership with the International Electrotechnical Commission and its System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres .

39. Cooperation has continued with relevant ISO Technical Committees to support sectoral initiatives. The Chairperson of ISO/TC 127 is the coordinator of the WP.6 Sectoral Initiative on Earthmoving Equipment.

40. ASTM International and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) work closely with WP.6. The contributions of both organizations, in support of the “Standards for the SDGs” event, will help to further raise awareness of Agenda 2030 amongst standards organizations.

Metrology and other areas of Standards, Quality and Metrology infrastructure

41. The Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) has actively contributed to the work of WP.6 and their support has been essential to the implementation of the “Standards for the SDGs” event. Since 2010, the Working Party has been a member of the Network on Metrology, Accreditation and Standardization for Developing Countries (DCMAS), which includes the following organizations: Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), International Committee of Weights and Measures (CIPM), International Accreditation Forum (IAF), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC), International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), International Committee for Legal Metrology (CIML), ISO, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Partnerships with regional organizations in regulatory cooperation and standardization policies

EASC and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

42. The International Model on Regulatory Harmonization, a set of tools developed by UNECE to help regional trading blocs approximate their regulatory policies, is used extensively by the CIS countries in their regulatory cooperation efforts, which are led by the Interstate Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification (EASC) of the CIS.

The Eurasian Economic Commission

43. The Eurasian Economic Commission used WP.6 “Recommendation L” as a basis for developing common technical regulations. Representatives of the commission regularly report on the progress of the implementation of their common regulatory work to the meetings of the MARS Group and to the WP.6 Annual Session. Currently, the WP.6 Vice Chair is the Minister of Technical Regulations of the Customs Union.

44. In order to ensure effective knowledge sharing, a representative of the UNECE WP.6 secretariat also attends the annual meetings of the EASC.

The European Commission

45. The European Commission continued to support UNECE activities in the areas of standardization policies and regulatory cooperation. The Commission also continues to participate in UNECE activities related to market surveillance and inspections, where UNECE has become the platform for the exchange of expertise between the European Union and other member States. Finally, the European Commission is an active partner in the work of the newly established Group of Experts on risk management in regulatory framework.

46. The European Union Technical Barriers to Trade Unit has recently agreed on the implementation of the GRM methodology on “Risk management in regulatory frameworks in the sector of fisheries”. The African Regional Standardization Organization has proposed Namibia and Uganda as pilot countries for developing tools for cooperation between customs and enforcement authorities.

Partnerships in the area of agricultural quality standards

47. WP.7 works closely with the European Commission and the Council of the European Union to maintain the complete harmonization of EU marketing standards with UNECE standards.

48. WP.7 cooperates with the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables to facilitate the common interpretation of UNECE standards and their application in international trade.

49. WP.7 cooperates with the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as well as the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables in developing new and maintaining existing commercial quality standards and coordinating and harmonizing the work.

50. Cooperation has also taken place with FAO in the organization of the exhibition on Pulses and the conference on food loss and standards; UNDP and the German development agency (GIZ) in capacity building in Central Asia; and, with the International Trade Centre (ITC) to include UNECE’s standards in the ITC Standards Map as well as through the provision of UNECE training materials on ITC’s “Sustainability Xchange” online platform.

Partnerships related to the Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade

51. UNECE cooperates closely with international and regional organizations in designing action-oriented recommendations for removing regulatory and procedural trade barriers identified through the studies. Representatives from the International Organization for Legal Metrology and IEC contributed to the inter-governmental discussions on removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Georgia, which were held in May 2018 during the Steering Committee’s High-Level Segment. UNECE also works closely with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) to ensure complementarity.

52. In addition, UNECE is working closely with UN Country Teams to integrate the recommendations of the trade needs assessment studies into national UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).