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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2014 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 18th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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**Progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society
at the regional and international levels**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has focussed its actions in implementing the outcomes of WSIS on areas related to economic development and sustainability. The work of the UNECE to support the WSIS objectives is carried out at the subprogramme level and the variety of activities reflects the multi-sectoral character of the organization.

2. UNECE remains very active on trade facilitation, in particular through its United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), which developed new recommendations in 2014. The Single Windows concept promotes the adoption of ICT-based solutions by public and private actors to achieve efficiency and promote better governance of international trade. The UNECE, together with UNESCAP, continued to support the UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices in Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. Capacity-building and training activities have been carried out on related matters, including in relation to the UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, which is a core tool to implement the WTO trade facilitation agreement. UNECE has also been helping the countries of the Customs Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation) and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) to establish Single Window facilities, including through the development of an electronic trade information system aligned with international standards.

3. Access to information and knowledge on environmental matters through the use of electronic tools is an important area of activity for UNECE, in particular in connection with the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). The Task Force on Access to Information monitors the implementation of Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools. Work is also being carried out on developing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the UNECE region. UNECE manages a number of web-based portals that provide access to environmental information and knowledge. Some of them, including in critical areas such the notification of industrial accidents with transboundary effects, were upgraded in 2014.

4. UNECE is strongly involved in the development of Intelligent Transport Systems and transport innovation. Standards, cybersecurity, software reliability, legal frameworks and information requirements need to be addressed in a holistic way. Priority areas for the development of ITS have been identified and vehicle automation has become the catalyst for many ITS activities.

5. UNECE also carried out relevant activities in other areas in 2014, including in connection with the management of statistical information systems and the potential for shared software development; support to women entrepreneurs on matters related to ICT in business and the use of e-tools to encourage innovation in the public sector and citizen participation. The UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence, through its affiliated International Specialist Centre on PPPs in ICT/broadband, plans to start working on the identification of international PPP best practices in ICT/broadband infrastructure projects.

6. In all these areas, UNECE has worked closely with other international organizations and stakeholders to ensure the relevance and increase the effectiveness of its actions. Mobilising strong partnerships will remain an important principle in our future activities contributing to the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS.

II. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

The following sections describe the work done by the various UNECE subprogrammes to support individual WSIS Action Lines.

A. ACTION LINE C1: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AUTHORITIES AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROMOTION OF ICTs FOR DEVELOPMENT

Trade

7. The UNECE through its United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) aims at facilitating national and international trade and business transactions. Both the public and private sectors jointly develop, maintain and support recommendations and business standards at UN/CEFACT. The overall objective of the recommendations and standards is to support institutions in their efforts to increase efficiency and transparency in trade transactions. For example, the Single Window concept, which is promoted in the trade facilitation recommendations, encourages adoption of ICT based solutions by public and private actors to achieve efficiency and promote better governance of international trade. In addition, UN/CEFACT's activities support Target 5, aiming at "making available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications in cooperation with the private sector".

B. ACTION LINE C2: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Economic Cooperation and Integration

8. As part of the UNECE work on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), the Government of Azerbaijan is hosting the International Specialist Centre on PPPs in ICT/broadband affiliated to the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence. The main objectives of the Specialist Centre in Baku, working under the auspices of UNECE, is to identify international PPP best practices in ICT/broadband to be used by countries in the preparation, structuring and implementation of infrastructure projects in the ICT sector.

Transport

9. UNECE is committed to placing Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) on the agendas of policymakers as ITS are key in shaping the future of sustainable mobility. Multiple ITS related activities were conducted in 2014. In particular, the policy segment of the seventy-sixth session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) was dedicated to ITS and "Innovations for a sustainable mobility", providing valuable insights on the coming opportunities for innovation in the transport sector.

10. UNECE jointly organized with ITU the "2014 Symposium on the future networked car". The symposium concluded that standards, cybersecurity, software reliability, information and education, legal frameworks and liability should be addressed in a holistic manner with a wide range of actors. The UNECE annual flagship workshop on ITS, which was organized together with the Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport of Belgium in November 2014, identified several priority areas where progress is needed: the

development of autonomous cars and automated driving, safety in intersections and level crossings, intelligent road charges and smart e-tolling and traffic management and variable message signs (VMS). Taking into account the significance of the quick developments in the area of vehicle automation and vehicles connectivity, the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) has refocused some of its resources to address this fast technological development.

11. In 2014, vehicle automation became the catalyst for many ITS activities including the promotion of traditional ITS across all transport modes and their infrastructures. For example, the joint meeting of the RID Committee of experts and the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15), through its informal working group on telematics, continued its work on ITS applications, aiming inter alia at improving the speed and efficiency of emergency responses involving dangerous goods in transport.

C. **ACTION LINE C3: ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

Environment

12. Timely, reliable, high quality and easily accessible environmental information is essential for evidence-based policies and informing citizens. At the same time, organizing a vast array of environmental data and making it available in a comprehensible manner is a challenging task. At the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Astana, 2011) ministers decided to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the UNECE region. Following up to this commitment, the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy with support from its Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the European Environment Agency (EEA), is assisting countries to carry out environmental assessments as well as monitoring the SEIS progress based on a number of targets and performance indicators¹.

13. Under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), a web-based platform has been established for a programme of pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins.² The platform was initially limited to the UNECE region but now offers a forum for a worldwide exchange of experiences, good practices and lessons learned. It is part of a framework for such an exchange which, under the guidance of a task force, also includes face-to-face workshops.

14. Activities under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) are currently focused on improving public access to environmental information and its active dissemination to the public, including through electronic information tools. Effective access to environmental information in the age of social media and electronic tools has been discussed by Parties and stakeholders at the Joint High-level Segment of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)³. The Task Force on Access to Information has continued its activities under the auspices of the Convention to facilitate this work.⁴ An overview of the countries' experiences with regard to access to product-related environmental information is being prepared to help sharing good practices. The Task Force has continued monitoring the implementation of Recommendations on the more effective use of

¹ <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2014/ece/cep/ece.cep.2014.8.e.pdf>

² <https://www2.unece.org/ehlm/platform/display/ClimateChange/Welcome>

³ <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5&mopp2/hls.html>

⁴ <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/tafi.html>

electronic information tools to provide public access to environmental information adopted through decision II/3 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention⁵ with a focus on increasing interoperability, data sharing and collecting good practices.

15. The Protocol on PRTRs to the Aarhus Convention is the only legally binding instrument to ensure minimum standards for equal rights and transparency in the use of environmental data. It offers a legal framework for enhancing public access to information. PRTRs allow access to specific environmental information for everybody, with virtually no restrictions. Free web-based access to geo-referenced environmental data empowers the public, decision makers in government and industry, scientists and journalists to make informed choices.

16. UNECE manages a number of web-based portals that provide access to environmental information and knowledge. Some of them were upgraded in 2014, including the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System web-based tool for notifying accidents with transboundary effects and seeking international assistance, and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) Clearinghouse, which is a web-based portal on issues relevant to transport, health and environment that also provides interactive facilities for the exchange of views and good practices.

17. In the context of the communication strategy under the Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP GREEN) programme⁶, a web-based portal will be set up in 2015 by the partner organizations, i.e. ECE secretariat to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, OECD, UNEP and UNIDO. The portal will be managed by OECD and will provide information about the green economy tools and the outputs under the Programme in the six beneficiary countries, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, such as green growth indicators, reform of environmentally harmful subsidies, SEA, EIA, resource efficiency and cleaner production, and sustainable public procurement.

Trade

18. The UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG)⁷ is a web-based, interactive knowledge management tool that covers all the major trade facilitation instruments from all key international organizations. It provides a single source where policymakers and implementers can find essential trade facilitation information. The TFIG helps policy makers and implementing managers identify, examine and select available solutions and possible paths for their trade facilitation reform efforts. It is a core tool to support the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Since its launch in September 2012, it has become increasingly popular. Only in the last 10 months of 2014, the Guide got more than 3,000,000 hits from 169 different countries around the world. The Guide is available in English, French, Russian and Spanish and will also be accessible in Arabic early 2015.

⁵ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/a_to_i/1st_meeting/ece.mp.pp.2005.2.add.4.e.pdf

⁶ <http://www.unece.org/env/sea/eapgreen.html>

⁷ <http://tfig.unece.org>

D. ACTION LINE C4: CAPACITY-BUILDING

Environment

19. The Secretariat of the Aarhus convention manages a database of capacity-building activities from around the world on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers⁸. The Secretariat encourages National Focal Points and stakeholders to contribute to the capacity-building activities database as this greatly facilitates information exchange and the planning of future activities. Via the www.prtr.net website anyone can use this database, including National Focal Points and stakeholders who wish to add information.

Trade

20. UNECE, together with UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, has continued supporting the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT). The network is a platform for exchange of knowledge and best practices in Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. UNNExT has published a series of technical guides on Single Window Implementation in the areas of business process analysis (BPA), data harmonization, legal framework, Single Window masterplan development and design for aligned trade forms. UNNExT has also rolled out an intensive two-week capacity-building event titled the Masterclass on electronic business and single window.

21. In 2014, three training events were organized on the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) in Rome, Dushanbe and Kiev. Under a Technical Cooperation project for Greece, UNECE has undertaken a number of initiatives, including capacity-building events, study tours and advisory services.

22. UNECE has provided methodological support and technical assistance in 2013-2014 to the countries of the Customs Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation) and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) to improve the understanding, planning and implementation of trade facilitation measures, notably by establishing Single Window facilities. The project has progressed in two directions: (1) developing an enabling political and organizational environment for the Single Window; and (2) helping to set up an electronic trade information exchange system, aligned with international standards (IISVVT), which will act as the basis for exchanges in the Customs Union. Six studies were drafted and over 9 capacity-building events were organized.

23. The Port Community System (local Single Window) at the port of Odessa was launched following three capacity-building seminars on Trade Facilitation and the Single Window organized by UNECE and several regional advisory missions to Kiev. The system is focused on the use of a single electronic trade document - the *electronyi naryad* (electronic order). In April 2014, the Interagency Working Group on the Single Window - Local Solution in the Port of Odessa broadened its scope to cover a wider range of trade facilitation issues in order to become a national trade facilitation body. This Group is making progress in the identification of legislative impediments for the Single Window and electronic signatures.

Gender

24. UNECE continues to collaborate with the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC) in Haifa and Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in organizing training workshops for professional women from Eastern Europe, South

⁸ <http://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/RLsearch.asp>

Caucasus and Central Asia. These workshops provide support, guidance and managerial tools to women entrepreneurs on the use of information communication technologies in doing business.

E. **ACTION LINE C5: BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY IN THE USE OF ICTs**

Trade

25. In 2014, UNECE in collaboration with experts from the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC) started to implement a project on “Transboundary trust space” (i.e. on the validation of e-documents). RCC has also cooperated with UN/CEFACT on the revision of the UNECE Recommendation No. 14 ‘Authentication of Trade Documents by Means Other Than Signature’, which is now completed.

F. **ACTION LINE C6: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

Environment

26. Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs endorsed a proposal on a number of activities to help establishing PRTRs and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This framework aimed at accelerated accession to the Protocol on PRTRs and the development of PRTR systems. Some of the challenges considered include the development of a methodology for making PRTR tools available free of charge; cooperation between countries with advanced experience in PRTRs and countries seeking to develop PRTRs and improved access to the Internet in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

G. **ACTION LINE C7: ICT APPLICATIONS**

1. ***C7.A e-Government***

Economic Cooperation and Integration

27. UNECE held an international conference on innovation in the public sector where leading experts discussed inter alia the role of ICT and e-government in improving the productivity and quality of public sector services, and in facilitating citizen involvement in creating and delivering new services. The conference resulted in a set of UNECE good practices, which will serve as the basis for capacity-building activities at the country level.

2. *C7.B e-Business*

Trade

28. Since 1989, UNECE has developed and maintained electronic business standards through the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)⁹. Among the most well-known and used of these standards is the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange Standard (UN/EDIFACT). This standard facilitates the exchange of information in many areas, including transport, customs, government and business procurement, just-in-time manufacturing and finance. UN/CEFACT also issues and continues to develop a host of data codes for exchanging information, including the United Nations Location Code (LOCODE) which has more than 100,000 Trade & Transport Locations used by transport and postal authorities in some 250 countries and territories. Among its other recommendations are the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents; the Single Window related Recommendations (Number 33, 34, 35), to enhance the efficient exchange of information between trade and government, and a Core Component Library (CCL) and related products.
29. Recent key deliverables from UN/CEFACT include UNECE Recommendation No. 14 ‘Authentication of Trade Documents by Means Other Than Signature’, which has been revised and published. The new Recommendation on ‘Consultative Approaches for Public and Private Sector Consultation’ has been finalized and expected to be published in February 2015. Another Recommendation on Single Window Interoperability has been finalized too.
30. In the 24th UN/CEFACT Forum in New Delhi four new projects were launched: Multi Modal Transport Reference Data Model; Common Framework for Freight Information Exchange Project; Purchase Order Financing Project and Integrating Trade Finance & Supply Chain Finance into Trade Facilitation. The UNECE Recommendation no. 4 on ‘National Trade Facilitation Bodies’ will be revised to address the recent developments in Trade Facilitation globally, especially after the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement.

3. *C7.F e-Environment*

31. In 2014, the Environment subprogramme (Aarhus secretariat) in collaboration with UNITAR and the OECD continued to provide up-to-date information on available electronic tools for Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR). The tools include the PRTR global portal¹⁰, PRTR Learn¹¹, the UNECE Public Participation website¹², and the Aarhus Clearinghouse for environmental democracy¹³.

⁹ <http://www.unece.org/cefact/index.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.prtr.net>

¹¹ <http://prtr.unitar.org>

¹² <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html>

¹³ <http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>

B. **ACTION LINE C11: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION**

Statistics

32. The UNECE Statistical Division, in cooperation with the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), OECD and UN-ESCAP organised a meeting on the management of statistical information systems in April 2014. The meeting was attended by participants from around 40 national and international statistical organisations. Delegates were particularly interested in exploring the potential for significant efficiency savings through shared software development, facilitated by a common statistical production architecture (released in December 2013). The UNECE has also continued to develop and promote standards for statistical data and metadata, including a common metadata framework, a generic statistical business process model, a generic statistical information model, and standards for data and metadata exchange. These activities are overseen by a high-level group for the modernisation of statistical production and services, comprising the heads of ten national and international statistical organisations.

Trade

33. Building on the successful joint work with ESCAP and other Regional Commissions, the Joint UN Regional Commissions Approach to Trade Facilitation was agreed and endorsed by the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions. In 2014, a joint UN Regional Commission proposal for a project to support member states in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement under UN Development Account 10th tranche was submitted.

34. UNECE also led an initiative to bring together a number of international organizations to issue a joint statement on a coordinated approach for delivering technical assistance for the implementation of the WTO trade facilitation agreement. The other signatory organizations include the International Trade Centre, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on behalf of the UN Regional Commissions of ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, the World Bank Group, and the World Customs Organization.