

**COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
(CSTD)**

**Twenty-fourth session
Geneva, 17 to 21 May 2021**

**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2020 to
implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

Submission by

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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 24th 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 implementation of the outcomes of WSIS by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) remains focussed on areas related to economic development and sustainability, in particular trade, innovation and environmental issues.
2. UNECE continues to contribute to putting the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement into practice. It has expanded its Trade Facilitation Guide (TFIG) and launched online tools and databases to share good practices and monitor developments. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) continually develops recommendations and guidelines to facilitate digital trade. It has advanced its guidance on Single Windows, streamlined processes for humanitarian relief consignments, deployed technologies such as blockchain for digital transactions, and facilitated cross-border exchanges in specific sectors, such as health care. Addressing central concerns around trade and sustainability, it has developed standards and systems to ensure traceability and adherence to norms in different areas, including waste movement and endangered species.
3. UNECE has advanced further its works on trade standards. Reducing food waste is a central concern, which the new FeedUp@UN platform contributes to address by reducing excess capacity and waste in agricultural supply chains.
4. UNECE work on innovation helps member States put in place policies, institutions, and processes that enable and promote broader, systematic experimentation with new ideas, including through the use of ICTs. A new flagship publication, the Innovation Policy Outlook for Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, provides comprehensive assessments of the scope, quality and efficiency of innovation systems and governance arrangements. Through the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), UNECE has launched several activities to help countries put the new SPECA Innovation for Sustainable Development Strategy into practice.
5. UNECE has continued to contribute to the development of environmental information systems. It facilitates access to environmental information through a range of digital tools that take into account the latest technological developments, including the use of geo-referenced data. The aim is to ensure that timely, reliable and high-quality environmental information, which is essential for evidence-based policies and informing the public, is easily accessible.

II. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

6. 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 GOVERNMENTS AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROMOTION OF ICTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Trade

7. As part of its mandate to develop, update, and diffuse recommendations and standards to facilitate national and international trade and business transactions, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) published Recommendation 33 in 2020, which updated base guidance on Single Windows.
8. UN/CEFACT developed and approved a new recommendation in 2020, simplifying, streamlining, and digitizing trade facilitation processes for emergency relief consignments. This recommendation builds on broad consultations with a range of cross-border management and humanitarian relief stakeholders, including OCHA, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and Doctors Without Borders.

Innovation: National e-strategies

9. The UNECE Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook (IPO) assesses the quality of innovation policies, institutions and processes across the six countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. At the core of the assessment is an analysis of the way innovation policy is governed, with a focus on national strategies oriented to supporting innovation, education and industrial development, including the ICT sector. In addition, the chapters on Armenia and Azerbaijan examine two ICT initiatives in detail - the Law on State Support for the Information Technology Sphere and the Grant Scheme under the State Fund for Information Technology, respectively – exploring how these two policies were designed, implemented and monitored.

B. ACTION LINE C3: ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Environment

10. In 2020, UNECE continued to support the development of a Shared Environmental Information System across the pan-European region. The aim is to ensure that timely, reliable and high-quality environmental information is easily accessible. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment remained the knowledge platform for the development of environmental monitoring, assessment and information systems.
11. Activities under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) aim to promote effective public access to environmental information. In 2020, the Task Force on Access to Information continued to support active dissemination of environmental information, as open digital data records, and the use of modern digital technologies by both public authorities and the general public. Draft updated recommendations on electronic information tools for the 2021 session of the Meeting

of the Parties to the Convention have been prepared. This update will take into account the developments in the Shared Environmental Information System, geospatial information management, Earth observation data, e-Government, open government data, reuse of public sector information and other relevant initiatives and technical developments.

12. The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Aarhus Convention provides minimum standards for equal rights and transparency in the use of environmental data and offers a legal framework for enhancing public access to information. 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. Ongoing work covers issues such as comprehensive data gathering and links with other electronic databases; modern means to provide easy to access information; and promotion of knowledge about use of pollutant releases and transfers for fact-based decision-making, including with regard to spatial planning and human health.

Trade

13. The Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) brings together the standards and tools of UNECE and other organizations in a free, web-based, interactive knowledge management tool. It provides a single source where policymakers and implementers can find essential trade facilitation information. Supporting implementation of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA), the guide now includes guidance on streamlining formalities and documentary requirements (TFA art 10.1) and inclusive trade facilitation (WTO TFA+).

C. ACTION LINE C4: CAPACITY-BUILDING

Environment

14. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and of the Protocol on PRTRs in cooperation with partner organizations, continued its efforts to strengthen countries' capacities to disseminate and reuse environmental information and promote modernization of nationwide digital environmental information systems using best available state-of-the-art digital technologies, including establishing and improving PRTRs. Knowledge management tools, such as the Aarhus Clearinghouse and its online databases, support these efforts.

Trade

15. UNECE supports the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) and other trade facilitation initiatives through training and capacity building conferences in the UNECE region as well as, in cooperation with other organizations, in Western Asia and Africa. In 2020, UNECE continued to assist countries in the dematerialization of their documentary requirements as well as organizing capacity building activities on the use of semantic data sets for individual countries' needs.

E. ACTION LINE C7: ICT APPLICATIONS: BENEFITS IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE

1. C7. E-Business

Trade

16. UNECE has launched an important instrument to reduce food loss and waste. FeedUP@UN is a digital platform-based food loss management system to help trace and quantify the food lost and to triangulate supply and demand in real time to direct resources to where they can be put to use rather than be wasted. FeedUP@UN addresses “invisible food”, i.e. food that is removed from the supply chain for various reasons at different stages. UNECE’s innovative approach, which has been embraced by other UN agencies, is an online blockchain-supported marketplace for the food supplies that currently go to waste and are removed from the human food production and consumption chain. The application produces data for planning policies and interventions at hotspots. It facilitates creating new supply chains and finding alternative uses for food otherwise lost. In this way, it contributes to generate income and employment.

2. C7. e-Health

Trade

17. UN/CEFACT is working on a project to facilitate cross-border exchange of data among health care and private health insurance providers for the reimbursement of claims. This project is closely related to work which has been done in CEN (Comité Européen des Normes) under TC445 but it has a broader geographic scope.

3. C7. e-Environment

Environment

18. In 2020, the Aarhus secretariat, in collaboration with UNITAR, OECD, EEA, UNEP, OSCE, CBD and other partner organizations, continued to provide up-to-date information on available electronic tools for access to environmental information and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). The related good practices and case studies can be accessed at the PRTR.net global portal, PRTR Learn, the UNECE Public Participation website, and the Aarhus Clearinghouse for environmental democracy.

Trade

19. UN/CEFACT has developed several standards around waste management. Adding to the existing coverage of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Waste, UN/CEFACT teams are working on waste analysis and reporting electronic messages. UNECE is now preparing with the Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions a workshop to promote the use of electronic information exchange for cross border movement of waste.

20. UNECE supports the implementation of systems for electronic exchange of Certificates of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). UNECE developed a Guide for

the implementation and use of electronic CITES permits. It also collaborated with DG-ENV on the development of a guide for Governments for electronic exchange of permits with the EU TRACES system. A new UNECE-UNESCAP task force provides a peer learning and co-ordination platform to support countries in putting CITES pilots into practice.

4. C7. e-agriculture

Trade

21. Sanitary and Phytosanitary certification is one of the most widely used certificates for product safety and compliance. UN/CEFACT has developed the UN/eCERT (SPS) standard allowing for an electronic exchange of these certificates between exporting and importing countries as well as the certificate management systems and border clearance processes. There are over thirty countries using the UN/CEFACT eCERT standard as well as many multilateral usages such as that of the International Plant Protection Convention.
22. UNECE supports international efforts in implementing UN/eCERT. A new publication, “Guidelines for the implementation of electronic sanitary and phytosanitary certificates”, which collects international best practice, is currently under preparation. In addition, in 2020 UN/CEFACT published the UN/eQUALITY standard, which allows the exchange of agriculture quality certificates in electronic format.

D. C11: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

C11: Regional action plan

23. UNECE, together with ESCAP, is supporting the seven countries of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) in their efforts to spur innovation while fostering regional co-operation on sustainable development. This support has been provided through a dedicated project on *Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* implemented under the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development. Under the project, UNECE carried out science, technology and innovation (STI) gap assessments of the SPECA countries in order to help strengthen their institutional capacities to carry out effective policies in these areas. The findings of the STI gap analysis will inform the development of the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development (adopted by the SPECA Governing Council in November 2019) which will contain concrete proposals for regional co-operation on innovation for sustainable development of the SPECA sub-region.