



Geneva, 26 October 2005

UN/CEFACT¹ reaches a landmark for coherent XML business standards

A productive Forum, attended by over 200 experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, was held this September by the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) in Lyon, France. During this meeting, UN/CEFACT took the final steps to enable industry groups to create XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language)²-based business documents for electronic trading.

This opens up important new opportunities for the implementation of electronic trading and, at the opening session, SAP AG, a leading company in enterprise software and business solutions, explained the significance of UN/CEFACT's work and how it was central to SAP's new Enterprise Service Architecture (ESA).

At the centre of this landmark development was the publication of the first extended list of reusable information components called the Core Components Library³. This will allow industry and business groups to develop United Nations XML business documents (Standard Schemas) for use in electronic trading and other information exchanges. The Library is based on a stable methodology and will be maintained through an open and extensive consultative process, thereby securing investments for the future.

Throughout the week meetings were conducted with representatives of Global Standards One⁴ (GS1), the OASIS Universal Business Language⁵ (UBL) Technical Committee and the eXtensible Business Reporting Language⁶ (XBRL) Group.

GS1 has made great progress in providing the retail industry with XML-based standards. As the largest user of the UN/EDIFACT electronic data interchange standard worldwide, it provides substantive input into the UN/CEFACT process for harmonizing business information. Through that harmonization, UN/CEFACT offers to other industry sectors interoperability standards now used by the retail community. *"We see now how UN/CEFACT is in the position to get endorsement from Governments for our work and to further develop it for use by other industry groups,"* said Mark d'Agostino, Standards Director for GS1, *"We recognize the progress that UN/CEFACT has made and wholeheartedly support their efforts."*

UN/CEFACT recognizes the contribution that the OASIS standard UBL has made to Governments and companies adopting concrete XML-based documents. Together with the UBL Technical Committee, UN/CEFACT is developing a plan to continue this work and further align it with UN/CEFACT Standards. By endorsing the UBL work UN/CEFACT will ensure the ongoing support and extension of this XML-based document approach. *"The prospect of working within the UN to advance global electronic business standards is an exciting one,"* said Jon Bosak, Chair of the OASIS UBL Technical Committee *"I look forward to completion of the plan to place UBL within the suite of technologies developed by UN/CEFACT"*.

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XBRL, the global standard for financial reporting, presented its work to the meeting. It discussed with UN/CEFACT how closer cooperation could ensure that the link between business data and financial reports can be established.

UN/CEFACT also decided to move forward on e-Government and the Single Windows for export and import clearance. Governments are increasingly providing Internet-enabled services. The creation of the e-Government Working Group, with the formal support of France, New Zealand, India and Viet Nam, as well as interest from Australia, Austria, United Kingdom and the United States, will allow Governments to benefit from UN/CEFACT's expertise and standards.

In view of the international interest generated by the UN/CEFACT Single Window Recommendation⁷ and the current move by many countries to establish such Single Windows, UN/CEFACT will organize a three-day Conference on Single Window Standards and Interoperability in Geneva in early 2006. This event, which will target operators of existing Single Windows and countries considering establishing such a facility, will also involve major international organizations.

Today, UN/CEFACT is able to deliver the results of years of hard work to the Business Community. " *The enthusiasm in the Forum is high, now that we have reached the landmark of producing a Core Components Library*" said Dick Raman, Chair of the Forum Management Group. " *This landmark, along with the support we have received for it in our discussions with global e-business organizations, will now enable us to produce coherent deliverables for the business community*".

As a United Nations Centre where standardization organizations and industry groups can align, harmonize and share their work, UN/CEFACT enables them to get endorsement of their work by governments and industry at the highest level.

The next UN/CEFACT Forum meeting is scheduled for 13-17 March 2006 in Vancouver, Canada.

For further information please contact:

Dick Raman
Chair, UN/CEFACT Forum Management
Group
e-mail: Dick.Raman@TIEglobal.com
Tel: +31-20-658 99 03

Jean Kubler
Acting Chief, Global Trade Solutions Branch
UNECE Trade Development and
Timber Division
e-mail: jean.kubler@unece.org
Tel: +41 (0)22 917 27 74
Website: <http://www.UNCEFACT.org>

¹ <http://www.uncefact.org>

² Extensible Mark-up Language

³ <http://www.unece.org/trade/untdid/welcome.htm>

⁴ <http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/ubl>

⁵ http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=ubl

⁶ <http://www.xbrl.org/Home/>

⁷ http://www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.htm