UN/CEFACT Project Proposal			
Proposed Project Name	Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange		
Date Submitted	27/06/2022	Project proposed by	TPF/AGRI
Date Last Update			

Project Purpose
Required

This project focuses on product conformity as part of a broader regulatory compliance framework to define a glide path for business-to-government (B2G) and business-to-business (B2B) transition from paper and pdf-based exchange of product conformity credentials towards a paperless future.

Product conformity systems and mutual recognition agreements provide global quality assurance and supply chain safety mechanisms. The increasing complexity of supply chains is adversely impacting the visibility of the product conformity assessment processes, potentially reducing trust in product claims.

Current product conformity and claims verification processes are vulnerable and cumbersome in an increasing digital trade environment with the electronic exchange of trade-related data. Digitalisation of accreditation and credentialing processes represent a response to this emerging problem. CASCO, the ISO International Committee on Conformity Assessments, has declared digitalisation a high priority to enhance international product conformity systems integrity. Digital validation of credentials and claims, including product certification, provides an important anchor of trust and means to establish the bona fides of the issuing authorities.

Industry has identified the risk of systems integrity failure, not limited to certificate counterfeiting or misuse, should a divergence of approaches or 'a mosaic of incompatible systems' emerges as Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) embrace 'their own way' of managing issues. A recent report by NATA, JAS-ANZ and GS1 in Australia explains 'the mosaic' is likely to take the form of an incompatible array of QR codes with proprietary (non-standard) syntax and semantics directing users to websites with limited, or no, validation of the credentials (competency) of the issuing authorities.

The strength and integrity of product conformity systems has significant implications for the digital trade environment. Linking products to certificates and consignments is gaining significant importance – especially in the context of increasing level of ESG supply chain regulations Current product conformity assurance systems struggle to provide traceability of the original conformity attestation back to the globally-recognised authority – typically the national accreditation bodies which operate under global mutual recognition agreements. Advances in supply chain traceability (not limited to blockchain, non-fungible tokens and verifiable credentials) are placing increased emphasis on ISO/IEC product identification standards, standardised semantics, and data carriers to associate physical products with claims about those products from creation, consumer interaction and the circular economy.

This White Paper aims to stocktake, align, and integrate existing UN/CEFACT bodies of knowledge with frameworks being developed by the global product conformity community, including IAF and ILAC members. It leverages and extends existing e.Cert standards and recent G2G work on Verifiable Credentials to define a practical way forward (a glide-path) for B2G and B2B exchange of product conformity certificates.

It will also ensure existing UN/CEFACT standards (data models, messages, BRS) are integrated into envisaged digital conformity systems to ensure interoperable exchange of physical and paperless documents.

Project Scope
Required

This project is closely linked with existing UN/CEFACT activities of the PoW 2021-2022, namely, focus area C Developing further;

(g) The development of standards and recommendations to enhance the harmonisation, exchange and processing of certificates used in trade;

(h) Work on a mutual recognition mechanism to facilitate domestic and cross-border paperless trade; and,

(i) Recommendations and standards relevant to existing UN/CEFACT domains such as Transport and Logistics; Supply Chain Management and Procurement; Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrifood; Travel and Tourism; etc.

UN/CEFACT considers Cross-border standardisation, simplification and harmonisation to be fundamental tools for the facilitation of international trading processes forming the nucleus of UN/CEFACT work.

The project complements existing UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations and aims to overcome existing challenges and constraints for the paperless movement of goods and services. It recognises the significant innovation and opportunity that Verified Credentials provides for Government and addresses a significant and widening gap that exists both between mature and less mature economies, between B2G and the vast B2B landscape.

The project brings ISO/IEC product identification standards into focus, aligned with UN/CEFACT norms with a view to providing clear, accessible and concise guidance for government and industry modernisation of product international product conformity systems.

This work will benefit the development of UN/CEFACT standards in future and governments implementing digitised trade facilitation solutions via ISC-PDA/eDATA Verifiable Credentials for Cross Border Trade – P1075

Project Deliveries
Required

Deliverable 1	Webinar to invite experts to brainstorm
Deliverable 2	White Paper on Product Conformity Certificate Exchange
Deliverable 3	Webinar to present findings

Exit Criteria
Required

Exit Criteria for Deliv. 1	Working group formation with industry lead
Exit Criteria for Deliv. 2	White paper ready to publish. Internal and External comment logs demonstrating that all comments have been taken into consideration.
Exit Criteria for Deliv 3	Publication of White Paper/Report

Project Team membership and required functional expertise
Required

Membership is open to UN/CEFACT experts with broad knowledge in the area of:	Trade Facilitation, SPS, Cross-border data harmonisation, eCerts, Verified Credentials
In addition, Heads of Delegations may invite technical experts from their constituency to participate in the work.	
Experts are expected to contribute to the work based solely on their expertise and to comply with the UN/CEFACT Code of Conduct and Ethics and the policy on Intellectual Property Rights.	

HOD Support

Geographic Focus

The geographical focus of the project is global

Initial Contributions

The following contributions are submitted as part of this proposal. It is understood that these contributions are only for consideration by the Project Team and that other participants may submit additional contributions to ensure that as much information as possible is obtained from those with expertise and a material interest in the project. It is also understood that the Project Team may choose to adopt one or more of these contributions "as is".

List any initial contributions

NATA/JAS-ANS/GS1 Discussion Paper on Digitalisation of Accreditation and Product Conformance. UN/CEFACT – ISC-PDA/eDATA Verifiable Credentials for Cross Border Trade – P1075

Resource Requirements

Participants in the project shall provide resources for their own participation. The existence and functioning of the project shall not require any additional resources from the UNECE secretariat.

Any Additional Request	Webinar support by UNECE Secretariat

Propose Project Leadership

Proposed	Project Leader Brett Hyland	E-mail	Brett.hyland@nata.com.au

Milestones

The following are draft milestones of the project

Yes/No*	ODP Stage	Expected Completion Date (Approval +6 months)
Yes	Project Inception	Approval + 2 months
No	Requirements gathering	
Yes	Draft development	Approval + 4 months
No	Public Dart Review	
Yes	Project Exit	Approval + 5 months
Yes	Publication	Approval + 6 months

* NOTE: The following stages are obligatory: Project Inception, Project Exit and Publication. Public Draft Review is obligatory for recommendations, business standards and technical standards. The presence of "Yes" in the field indicates that the stage is required for the project and an expected completion date should be provided.