



## Importation of emergency relief 33<sup>rd</sup> UN/CEFACT Forum

Meeting Minutes 1  
Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019: 9am – 3.30pm

1. Arrival, opening remarks & introduction to OCHA: 9am – 9.30 am
2. Introduction to Working Group on Customs and Humanitarian Relief: 9.30am – 10.00am
3. UN/CEFACT project briefing and discussion: 10am – 12.30pm
4. Review guideline topics and next steps: 2pm – 3.30pm

During the meetings of the Working Group on Customs and Humanitarian Relief, in the auspices of the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week in Geneva in February 2019, discussions around streamlining importation and border clearances highlighted the need for a high-level policy recommendation. UN/CEFACT and OCHA were pleased to have held the 'Readiness for importation of emergency relief' session during the UN/CEFACT 33rd Forum on Tuesday 2nd April 2019.

### **1. Arrival, opening remarks & introduction to OCHA**

The event commenced with opening remarks from Ms. Maria Rosaria Ceccarelli, OiC Director at United Nations Centre for Trade and Facilitation (UN/CEFACT), and Mr. Rudolf Muller, Chief Emergency Response Support Branch (ERSB) from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA). Ms. Ceccarelli introduced the role of UN/CEFACT as experts in trade facilitation, and the opportunity they see to support the global community in collaborating with OCHA in this project. Mr. Muller briefly introduced OCHA's mission to co-ordinate the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crisis. He shared that despite UN resolutions, international instruments and recommendations, very few governments are adequately prepared for the possibility that they may one day require and receive huge quantities of relief aid. Creating a high-level policy recommendation that holds the credibility of being reviewed by the UN/CEFACT programme will help in improving readiness for the importation of emergency relief aid.

### **2. Introduction to Working Group on Customs and Humanitarian Relief**

Ms. Virginie Bohl, from OCHA facilitated Working Group on Customs and Humanitarian Relief (IMPACCT) project, presented the challenges of humanitarian aid providers, governments, Customs administrations, private organizations, regulatory bodies and donors when responding immediately after a disaster. There is a need for clear end to end processes for importation of relief items that can be understood by



humanitarian responders who may not have previous experience importing into the country or with such immediacy. These expedited processes need to consider that Customs could receive up to ten times their normal consignments; could experience disruptions to normal operations such as low staffing, electricity or infrastructure damage; and the immediate need to import specialist items such as telecommunications, medicines and vehicles. The IMPACCT working group convenes a network of partners that advocate for and promote the implementation of internationally recommended Customs facilitation measures for humanitarian readiness and response.

### 3. UN/CEFACT project briefing and discussion

#### Goals

Ms. Virginie Bohl (OCHA) introduced the proposed goals for the UN/CEFACT project on importation of emergency relief. It was proposed to collaborate with experts in trade facilitation, aid providers, aid donors, NDMA's, Customs administrations, private sector, governments, regulatory bodies and academia, in order to produce a recommendation and guidelines for Member States to enhance national capacity and readiness for prioritizing and managing an influx of relief aid in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The proposed objectives included: promotion of the value of readiness in the importation of emergency relief; improve awareness of a broad range of stakeholders; and deliver clear and accessible guidelines enabling decision makers to strategically implement facilitation mechanism for importation of emergency relief. It was discussed that the objectives should more reflect the impacts the policy would like to make, so were adjusted to say: Member States to understand how to enhance disaster readiness for emergency relief importation, and to raise awareness and support capacity building for the broad range of stakeholders involved in emergency relief importation.

#### Scope

The initial scope proposed included catering for natural disasters, targeting Customs administrations, including importation and temporary admission scenarios, and producing guidelines that go beyond existing international standards. After discussion, it was proposed that the scope should also specify:

- A restriction to the emergency response phase (days 0 -14).
- That it includes goods to be imported for home use, and that transit scenarios should also be included as well as temporary admission.
- That the target audience needs to go beyond Customs administrations. An alternative suggestion was the term 'inbound disaster relief logistics', however this term refers to general incoming movement of goods rather than reflect complexities of importation. This needs further discussion, in the meantime the target audience is described as 'decision makers in government responsible for facilitating importation of disaster relief items'

It was discussed that although there is a need for guidelines in complex emergencies and guidelines targeted to humanitarian actors, the scope of this project should exclude these elements. It was also



discussed whether the project will include implementation planning (i.e. when a Member State decides they want to improve their readiness, who do they engage and how?). This was also suggested to be out of scope. These elements may fall into scope of future projects or initiatives.

### Key outputs

Proposed project outputs included: the published policy recommendation document, increased engagement with Member States and increased awareness amongst non-traditional actors<sup>1</sup>. It was acknowledged that a communications strategy needs to be devised to achieve these goals. An online community of practice is also to be established for review and comments on sections. This will be setup on the OCHA Virtual OSOCC platform.

### Timeframes

The timeframes were presented according to the UN/CEFACT schedule. This includes potentially presenting the work in progress policy at the UNECE Autumn forum to be held in Sept or Oct 2019. This could be a potential platform for the project to discuss their work and will be discussions further as the project proceeds.

The draft report will need to be ready for public review 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019 according to the UN/CEFACT schedule. The review period will be two months, and the project exit date 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. The publication approval will be conducted at the 26<sup>th</sup> UN/CEFACT plenary in 2020.

Key dates are:

- Project initiation - 2nd April 2019
- Project meetings - regular meetings over six month period
- UNECE Autumn forum (location TBC) - Sept/Oct (Exact date TBC)
- Public Review Starts - 15th October 2019
- Public Review Closes- 15 December 2019
- Project Exit - 31 Dec 2019
- Publication - 26th UN/CEFACT Plenary (May 2020)
- Marketing - June 2020

This allows approximately six months for the drafting of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of project, 'non-traditional actors' refers to humanitarian actors who contribute primarily outside of IASC arrangements. (For instance, the civil protection and emergency services of national governments, technical partners/networks, specialized organizations etc.). 'Conventional actors' refers to IASC-focused actors: UN Agencies, 'mainstream' NGOs, IFRC/ICRC, donors (fundraising), etc.



## Next Steps

OCHA will update the slides based on the discussion and comments in the session. These are to be distributed to all parties that have an interest or we believe can provide valuable contribution to the development of the policy / guidelines. These parties will be asked to nominate a representative to contribute to the drafting of the recommendation and guidelines and attend the next meeting to be scheduled on Wed 24th April 2019.

## 4. Review ideas for guideline topics

Initial comments were offered around the areas that the guidelines should cover, including:

- The use of technology be utilized to ensure all actors were made aware of impending emergency consignments
- Who all the stakeholders are in the importation process, and what is their interest and their roles?
- The scale of the emergency and response phases
- Types of goods and prioritization of incoming goods
- Response activities e.g. One-stop shop to be established in suitable location, and who this could be coordinated and who this could be managed by?
- Pre-arrival information for Border Control agencies and airport authorities (ICAO?)
- Preparedness activities e.g. Legal / process mechanisms
- Inclusion of academia
- Certification of warehouses
- Responsibility of exporting country
- Might want to look at existing agreements for transit e.g. TIR convention

It was suggested the initial ideas be grouped into general principles, preparedness and response sections.

The session concluded close to 4pm. All attendees were thanked for their participation and contributions.

### CONTACT

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