



Importation of emergency relief
UN/CEFACT Policy recommendation

Meeting Minutes 2
Wednesday 24th April 2019: 11am – 12.30pm (CET)
Friday 26th April 2019: 3.30pm – 5pm (CET)

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. To this end, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-business (UN/CEFACT) have initiated a collaborative project to support Member States to produce a centralized policy recommendation and guidelines for Member States to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of relief consignment importation. Further to the initial engagement session held at the UN/CEFACT 33rd Forum on Tuesday 2nd April, two additional project briefing sessions were held on Wednesday 24th and 26th April.

1. Attendees:

Global Express Association (Carlos Grau Tanner)	HELP Logistics (Alia Gharaibe)	ICRC (Eric Monfort)	IFRC (Isabelle Granger)
MSF-Belgium (Rashid Subira)	OCHA Access Policy (Sophie Solomon)	OCHA Donor Support Group (Alex Fraile)	OXFAM (Rod Hogg)
Save the Children (Pat Brooke)	UN/CEFACT (Estelle Igwe)	USAID (Nicholas Farmer)	World Trade Organization (Liliana Popescu)
World Trade Organization (Michael Roberts)			

2. Key discussions points

- a. **Paper-based mechanisms:**
Focus of the policy recommendation needs to be on mechanisms that can be rapidly put in place assuming no availability to electricity and therefore information systems
- b. **Preparedness:**
All elements of the recommendations focus primarily on preparedness, with the understanding that response mechanisms will then flow consistently from the preparedness work. It was suggested the structure of the draft outline be reviewed accordingly.
- c. **Terminology:**



The goal of the project is valid; however, we need to ensure the communications make it clear how it is different from existing guidelines. Specifically, the right name needs to be found for the guidelines to ensure that it is not confused with existing guidelines, this is especially important as once the policy is published it is very difficult to change the name.

d. INGO registration

Approvals of INGO's is considered a high priority mechanism from the humanitarian community. It was acknowledged that the AEO framework has its place in the registration process, however the administrative barriers are steep for many humanitarian organizations.

e. Complex emergencies

It was questioned whether complex emergencies should be included in scope. Considering the specific considerations for protracted crises however, it was agreed this was best dealt with as a separate policy.

f. Beware of one size fits all

A concern was raised that the policy guidelines will be too 'vanilla' and not reflect specific regional or local context which might affect the ability of governments to operationalize the recommendations.

g. Languages

Spanish and Arabic were discussed as potential additions to the set of languages the policy recommendation may be translated into.

h. Alignment with WTO trade facilitation agreement program

It was raised that the WTO are having a session on 10th May to discuss the Research Project on Natural Disaster and Trade program, which has similar goals to our UN/CEFACT project however looks specifically at trade recovery across immediate disaster response, recovery and resilience phases. The project teams will engage further to ensure the work is aligned.

3. Updates to Draft Outline (for review):

- a. Guidelines section is now grouped by 'New workflow mechanisms for emergency relief' and 'Integration into existing operations', to move away from Preparedness vs Response.
- b. Paper-based processes and NGO registration has been given greater profile
- c. Section added for considerations relevant to specific contexts
- d. Section added for use of Customs brokers, including potential for self-clearance by pre-registered humanitarian organizations
- e. Section added for possibility of offering Humanitarian Customs taskforce
- f. Section added for pre-assessment of appropriate Customs access / entry points



4. Next steps

- a. Distribute updated draft outline of policy recommendation
- b. Agree on draft outline sections
- c. Confirm which sections contributors are interested in drafting
- d. All contributors who have not yet done so need to complete [UN/CEFACT registration form](#) (selecting 'Int'l Trade Procedures' as Area of Interest)
- e. Set timeframes for draft inputs
- f. Identify and engage any actors / stakeholders who have yet to feedback
- g. Next meeting Tuesday 14th May (we will run two sessions at 11am and 3.30pm)

CONTACT

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Ms. Virginie BOHL
bohl@un.org
Tel. +41 22 917 1792

Ms. Geeta REDDY
geeta.reddy@un.org
Tel. +41 22 917 2857