**RECOMMENDATION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL
CONCERNING THE USE OF CODES
FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF DATA ELEMENTS**
(22 May 1984)

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL,

DESIRING to facilitate the interchange of data among Customs administrations and between Customs administrations and participants in international trade,

CONSIDERING that it is desirable that internationally agreed and universally applicable codes should be used for the representation of data elements in such interchange of data,

HAVING REGARD to and supporting International Standards adopted by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) concerning the use of codes or coding structures for the representation of data elements,

HAVING REGARD to and supporting Recommendations adopted by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/UN) which recommend the use of codes or coding structures for the representation of data elements for international trade purposes,

CONSIDERING that the codes or coding structures referred to in the Annexes to this Recommendation provide a suitable basis for the representation of data elements in the interchange of data,

RECOMMENDS that Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions, should use the codes or coding structures specified in the Annexes to the Recommendation and future updated or revised versions of these codes or coding structures for the representation of data elements in the interchange of data among Customs administrations and between Customs administrations and participants in international trade whenever there is a need for a coded designation,

POINTS OUT that acceptance of this Recommendation requires the acceptance of the Recommendation and of at least one Annex thereto, and that each Annex shall be taken to be a separate Recommendation,

REQUESTS Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation to notify the Secretary General of the Council of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and of the conditions of its application. The Secretary General will transmit this information to the Customs administrations of all Members of the Council. He will also transmit it to the Customs administrations of the members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies and to Customs or Economic Unions which have accepted this Recommendation.

ANNEX I

Persons

1.   Recommended coding structure

With regard to the design of a code for persons (e.g. suppliers, consignors, exporters, consignees, importers and declarants, etc.), the general guidelines concerning the coding of persons which have been prepared by the CCC Working Party on Customs applications of computers should be used.

These general guidelines, which have been developed in order to provide practical assistance to Customs administrations at the national level and which are compatible with International Standard ISO 6523 (Data interchange - Structure for the identification of organizations), are contained in the File on the computerization of Customs operations.

2.   Summary description

The general guidelines promote the use of a uniform approach to the coding of natural and legal persons involved in international trade operations and of interest to Customs (e.g., importers, exporters, Customs clearance agents, etc.). In particular, the guidelines deal with the function of codes, persons identified, the choice of codes, the length and format of codes, the identification of other elements, the identification of foreign suppliers, the use of check characters, and criteria and systems considerations to be taken into account in the development of codes.

As indicated above, the guidelines are compatible with International Standard ISO 6523 which specifies the following structure for identifying organizations for data interchange purposes : (a) an International Code Designator (ICD) (fixed-length four-digit code); (b) an organization code; and (c) an organization name. The organization code consists of up to 14 characters that uniquely identify an organization within an organization coding scheme. The organization code can involve the use of alphabetic, numeric or alphanumeric characters and it is recommended that the code should contain a check character which can be included within the organization code or in a separate field.

ANNEX II

Container identifiers

1.   Recommended codes

        Attention is drawn to the ISO code contained in International Standard 6346 (Freight containers - Coding, identification and marking) for the representation of data concerning freight containers used in modes of transport other than air transport, and to the code developed by IATA for the representation of data concerning air freight containers.

        Whenever container identification data are captured and processed by Customs, it is recommended that 17 characters should be provided for in ADP systems and associated documents in order to accommodate the ISO code (a possible total of 17 characters) and current and future versions of the IATA code (9 and 12 characters respectively).

2.   Summary description

A.   ISO code

        International Standard 6346 establishes a 17-character alphanumeric marking code system for freight containers and provides unique international identification by means of an owner code, a serial number, and a country code, a check-digit system for verifying the accuracy of the recording of the owner code and serial number, and information concerning container size and type characteristics.

B.   IATA code

        The code developed by IATA for the representation of data concerning air freight containers currently comprises 9 alphanumeric characters (unit type, size and compatibility, serial number, and owner code). In 1990, the IATA code will consist of
12 alphanumeric characters including a check digit.

ANNEX III

Dates

1.   Recommended code

The representation provided for in ECE Recommendation No. 7 (Numerical representation of dates, time, and periods of time) which is based upon, inter alia, International Standard 2014 (Writing of calendar dates in all-numeric form) and 3307 (Information interchange - representations of time of the day) should be used for the representation of calendar dates and the time of day (e.g. departure date and time, arrival date and time, contract date, exchange date, Goods declaration acceptance date, clearance date, etc.).

2.   Summary description

ECE Recommendation No. 7 (Numerical representation of dates, time, and periods of time) is based upon, inter alia, International Standards ISO 2014 and 3307.

ISO 2014 concerns the writing of dates of the Gregorian calendar in all-numeric form, signified by the elements year, month, day, and recommends that all-numeric dates should be written in the following order : year-month-day (i.e. YYYYMMDD) and should consist of four, two, and two digits to represent the year, month and day respectively.

ISO 3307 is designed to establish uniform time representations based upon the 24-hour timekeeping system. It provides a means for representing local time in digital form for the purpose of interchanging information among data systems. Local time is defined as clock time in public use at the point of origin. In the 24-hour timekeeping system, local time may be expressed by combinations of the time elements hours, minutes and seconds, for example, hours and minutes (HHMM).

With regard to calendar dates, attention is drawn to the fact that ECE Recommendation No. 7 recommends the use of only two characters to represent the year (i.e. YYMMDD).

ANNEX IV

Currencies

1.   Recommended code

        The ISO three-letter alphabetic currency code contained in International Standard 4217 (Codes for the representation of currencies and funds) should be used for the representation of currencies.

2.   Summary description

        ISO 4217 provides the structure for a three-letter alphabetic code and an equivalent three-digit numeric code for the representation of currencies and funds.

        The first (left most) two characters of the alphabetic currency code in ISO 4217 provide a code unique to the currency authority to which it is assigned. Wherever practicable, it is derived from the ISO alpha-2 country code contained in ISO 3166 (Codes for the representation of names of countries) which is recommended by the Customs Co-operation Council and by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/UN). The third (right most) character of the alphabetic code is an indicator, preferably mnemonic, derived from the name of the major currency unit or fund. In non-banking applications, the first (left most) two characters are sufficient to identify a currency. The numeric currency code is derived, where possible, from the United Nations Standard Country or Area Code.

        Recommendation No. 9 adopted in February 1978 by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/UN) recommends the use of the ISO three-letter alphabetic currency code for the representation of currencies for international trade purposes.

ANNEX V

Country Codes

1. Recommended codes

The International Standards ISO 3166 alpha-2 codes for the representation of countries, referred to in UN/ECE Recommendation No. 3, should be used for the representation of countries in international trade.

However, it should be noted that acceptance of this WCO Recommendation does not preclude the use of other codes referred to in ISO 3166 for the representation of names of countries for certain applications (for example, the ISO alpha-3 country code for machine readable passports, as laid down in the CCC/IATA Advance Passenger Information Guidelines). Acceptance of the Recommendation also does not preclude the use of non-ISO codes for national purposes or for internal purposes in the case of countries belonging to a Customs or Economic Union.

2. Summary description

The ISO alpha-2 country code consists of a two letter alphabetic code.

ANNEX VI

Descriptions of goods, and tariff or statistical headings

1.   Recommended coding structure

       The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System should be used.

2.   Summary description

       The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System is a six-digit multipurpose nomenclature for transportable goods, which meets simultaneously the needs of Customs authorities, statisticians concerned with external trade or production, carriers and producers. The Harmonized System is suitable for automatic data processing and transmission and provides a common terminology and code specifically identifying 5019 groups of goods resulting from a detailed expansion of 1241 four-digit headings. The latter result from a very extensive revision and updating, not only in detail but also in structure, of the Customs Co-operation Council Nomenclature (CCCN). The Harmonized System can be further subdivided, where necessary, to meet national or international requirements.

ANNEX VII

Customs procedures

1.   Recommended code

        The general guidelines and one-digit code developed by the CCC Working Party on Customs applications of computers should be used for the representation of Customs procedures. The general guidelines and the one-digit code are contained in the File on the computerization of Customs operations.

2.   Summary description

        The code for the representation of Customs procedures developed by the CCC Working Party on Customs applications of computers is a broad level one-digit code within which the principal Customs procedures are identified and within which users can develop unique codes to meet national or international requirements.

ANNEX VIII

Units of measurement

1.   Recommended codes

        The codes contained in ECE Recommendation No. 20 (Codes for units of measurement used in international trade) should be used for the representation of units of measurement.

2.   Summary description

        The unit of measurement codes developed by the ECE consist of a fixed-length (three letter) alphabetic code, and a fixed-length (three-digit) numeric code.

ANNEX IX

Mode of Transport Code

1. Recommended codes

The codes contained in ECE Recommendation No. 19 (Codes for mode of transport and the corresponding means of transport used in international trade) should be used for the representation of modes of transport.

2. Summary description

The mode of transport codes developed by the ECE consist of a single digit numeric code. However, provision is made for the possibility of a second numeric digit where the basic code needs to be sub-divided.

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