UNECE Forum on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)

Geneva, Switzerland, 6-7 June 2002

Information Notice

Introduction

1. This information notice gives details regarding the organization and participation in the Forum on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), organized under the auspices of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development (TSIED) in cooperation with the Centre for Trade Facilitation and E-Business (CEFACT). The Forum will be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on 6-7 June 2002, in conjunction with the annual session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

2. New information and communications technology (ICT) is transforming the economic landscape bringing unparalleled opportunity and challenge. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is committed to ensuring that the member States and especially transition economies of central and eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will be able to exploit the immense potential of the Information Age.

Objectives and scope

3. Numerous discussions have taken place on the issue and several international forums on the subject matter have been organized over the last few years. The objective of this Forum is to take the stock of accumulated knowledge, expertise and to prepare an inventory of work currently being undertaken by relevant international organizations to date.

4. The major goal of the Forum is to analyze the current development process of ODR from Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and increasing interface with new Information and Communications Technology (ICT). By focusing on major existing ODR activities at the regional and global level, it aims to understand both the current state of technology and future directions and to propose solutions to the present difficulties.
5. Overall six expert panels on technical, business and legal issues will be held during one and half day meeting, bringing together around 20 international experts who will discuss the major issues and set the recommendations for further work in this field.

6. It will consider the major barriers for a large diffusion of its applications. A highlight will be put on the use of new technologies and on the interface between the human-based and machine-based ODR process with special reference to XML lower common denominator (odrXML).

7. The Forum will also seek to find the ways and means of expanding benefits of ODR to developing and transition economies in order to contribute to reducing digital divide. Finally, it will set out the future directions of ODR in technical, financial and legal terms.

8. Speakers will be invited from major academic institutions (University of Massachusetts Centre for Information Technology and Dispute Resolution, University of Geneva), the business communities and major international organizations (the European Commission, ECODIR, WIPO, UNCITRAL, CEFACT, OECD, UNCTAD, ICC among others).

9. Participants include key decision-makers and officials from all over the region; people who will provide the framework by fostering infrastructure developments for ODR; international business leaders with years of experience in ODR; the major players in ODR implementation who will set the pace for the future.

10. This exercise will lead the participants to understand the implications of ODR issues for e-business, e-government and e-work in the ongoing process of digital economy development.

11. The Forum will be conducted with simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Russian.

Venue

12. The Forum is planned to take place at the Palais des Nations, Geneva starting at 10.00 on 6 June 2002. The provisional programme of the Forum is attached herewith and the final programme can be obtained at the end of May 2002 from the UNECE secretariat at: daewon.choi@unece.org

Participation

13. In order to assure the practical focus of the Forum, participation in the Forum is open to both representatives of Governments and to enterprises, which are interested in discussing issues of the digital economy development and enhancing their expertise in this area. Attendance by the private sector from transition economies is particularly encouraged. In addition, representatives of governmental and semi-governmental bodies involved in ecommerce related activities, as well as e-government and e-work, will be invited.

13. Representatives from the European Commission and other relevant international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other interested international agencies also will be invited.

Passport and Visa Requirements
14. All participants should be in possession of a valid passport, with an entry visa (if required) which may be obtained from the Swiss diplomatic representation in each participant’s country. It is always advisable that visa applications, if required, be made at the earliest possible date.

Languages

15. The working languages of the Forum will be English, French and Russian.

Participation fee and cost of attending

16. There is no conference fee for this Forum. All the cost of travel and stay in Geneva is borne by the participants as well as the hotel reservation.

Registration

17. Interested parties are invited to fill out the attached Registration Form (photos are not necessary) and return it as soon as possible to the following email address: marina.dolgova@unece.org. Seats are limited, therefore a late registration may not be accepted due to the capacity problem.

Further Details

18. Further details on the organization of the Forum can be obtained through the UNECE secretariat:

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Forum Coordinator  
Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities  
UNECE Secretariat  
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Annex I

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Forum on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)

6-7 June 2002
Palais des Nations, Geneva

UNECE
Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development (TSIED)

IN COLLABORATION WITH Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (CEFACT)

Overview of the Forum
The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will organize the Forum on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) on 6-7 June 2002 in Geneva.

The Forum aims at exploring key issues on the development of Alternative Dispute Settlement and Internet-based Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) to identify and exploit new challenges and opportunities. The discussion in the Forum will not only raise awareness of the current status of development but also provide a vision of the vast potential and upcoming opportunities for developing and transition economies.

To this end, high-level speakers will come together at the UNECE 2002 Forum at the Palais des Nations, Geneva in order to present the future of the Internet-based dispute arbitration, mediation and settlement in the new millennium and its implications for the development of digital economy. Speeches will be given by high-ranking government officials, representatives from major international organizations (the European Commission, WIPO, UNCITRAL, OECD, ICC, CEFAC) and high-level speakers representing key players in the industry both at the global and regional level.

### Objectives of the Forum

- Understand how Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) stems and differs from Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- Assess the benefits and role of newly emerging ODR systems for the development of digital economy at the regional and global level
- Review the technical, financial and legal infrastructure requirements, evaluate the current developments and identify major barriers
- Consider interoperability issues for cross border ODR systems
- Examine prospects for implementation in developing and transition economies
- Consider the impact of new technologies on ODR development and its implications for future global trading system
- Understand the ongoing odrXML development project of the European Commission
- Understand current work of major international organizations
- Suggest how SME can benefit from ODR systems
- Identify the needs for capacity building in the region
- Promote awareness of “Best Practices” in ODR for trade, investment and enterprise development
- Recommend further work to be undertaken at the regional and global level

### Parallel Events

- Round tables on specific ODR topics on demand
- Focus discussion groups on specific country or regional projects to promote ODR networks on demand

### Annex II

Preliminary version. 5 March 2002
UNECE FORUM PROGRAMME

Day One

Thursday, 6 June 2002

09.00 Registration/Welcoming Reception

10.00 Welcome address by: Ms. Executive Secretary of ECE

Opening address by: His Excellency Mr. Dan Nica* (to be confirmed)
Minister of Information Technology and Communications, Romania

10.20 Keynote speakers: 3 speakers

Main Topics:
Future of Digital Economy
Future of Dispute Resolution
Future of Global Trading System

11.00 New Internet Technologies and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR): 6 speakers

Main Topics:
State of the Art and Main Issues of ODR
Fourth Party and ODR: Beyond the Trusted Third Party?
ODR Process Modelling and odrXML
Patterns and Layers of ODR
Cases of ODR Practices

Panel discussion

13.00 Lunch

15.00 Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and Regulatory Challenges: 5 speakers

Main Topics:
Legacy of CDR, ADR and Regulatory Requirements for ODR
ODR Trustmark, Mutual Recognition and Cross-Border ODR
Jurisdiction, Private International Law and Global ODR System

Panel discussion

16.30 Coffee break

16.45 Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Development and the Role of International Organizations

European Commission, WIPO, UNCITRAL, OECD, ICC, UNCTAD, CEFACT, UNECE TSIED
Panel discussion

18.00   Close of the session
18.15   Reception

D a y   T w o

Friday, 7 June 2002

10.00   Country Experience of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in developed Economies:
        3 speakers from OECD region
        Main Topics:   Experiences to date
                        Challenges and Major Barriers
                        Future Directions

10.30   Coffee break

10.45   Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and Implication for Developing and Transition
        Economies:   4 speakers from developing and transition economies
        Main Topics:  ODR and SMEs
                        ODR and Digital Economy Development in Developing and Transition
                        Economies
                        ODR and Digital Divide
                        ODR and Capacity Building

13.00   Close of the Forum

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For further information on the Forum please contact:
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