

Minimum Standards for Ship Agents and Ship Brokers

Recommendation No. 45



**United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation
and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)**



UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

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Foreword

A ship agent's role is of vital importance in international maritime logistics and directly affects not only the economic success of a voyage, but the safety and wellbeing of the crew. A ship agent's primary responsibility is to represent the ship owner or charterer in port, clearing the vessel with authorities and managing any relevant services before, during and after port visits. Acting as an intermediary, the ship agent provides expertise and ensures that all the regulations and requirements are complied with - essentially being a conduit for all information exchanges and interactions between the ship and the port.

Increased digitalization presents opportunities for the profession and the shipping industry at large, as digital data sharing allows vessels to access up-to-date information to inform decision-making at all stages of the voyage. Ship agents will therefore continue to adapt to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the maritime transport chain and help translate these gains to contribute to achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This Recommendation is an update of the 1988 UNCTAD minimum standards for ship agents and a reflection of the changes in operational practices in the ship agency profession. It also recognizes, for the first time, the role of the ship broker in bringing the ship and cargo together. It aims to reconcile the effects of increased digitalization with the requirements for ship agents and ship brokers. It draws particular attention to the importance of upholding a high standard of business ethics and professional conduct and promoting a high level of professional qualifications and experience, necessary to combat maritime fraud and provide high-quality service.

In partnership with the IMO, the definitions in this Recommendation were brought closer in line with the Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965, and amended in 2018 to include the digital exchange of shipping information between ships and ports, an area of UN/CEFACT's expertise. Since 2019, the FAL Convention requires all actors to exchange data electronically and strongly encourages the use of the Maritime Single Window, adapted from UN/CEFACT's recommendations and guidelines.

UN/CEFACT's mission is to improve the capacity of business, trade, and administrative organizations to trade effectively and reduce administrative burden. Given the vital role played by ship agents in ensuring that maritime transport continues to operate effectively and efficiently, the standards presented in this Recommendation contribute to this capacity building and underpin the wider work of the UNECE, particularly in the field of SDG 8 which promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The minimum standards outlined in this Recommendation also contribute to combatting illicit trade and piracy that greatly undermine our collective efforts to reach sustainability and equality. And just as this illegal activity transcends national borders, we must forge a joint response to help build the capacity of ship agents and brokers who are working on the front lines. I therefore invite all concerned actors to make an effective use of this Recommendation.



Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Note

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The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

Simple, Transparent and Effective Processes for Global Commerce

UN/CEFACT's mission is to improve the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transitional economies, to exchange products and relevant services effectively. Its principal focus is on facilitating national and international transactions, through the simplification and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows, and so contribute to the growth of global commerce.

Participation in UN/CEFACT is open to experts from United Nations Member States, Intergovernmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Through this participation of government and business representatives from around the world, UN/CEFACT has developed a range of trade facilitation and e-business standards, recommendations and tools that are approved within a broad intergovernmental process and implemented globally.

UN/CEFACT is committed to ensuring that the gender dimension is reflected in norms, roles, procedures, and access to resources. Government and trade are encouraged to promote equal opportunities for women and men within the scope of Trade Facilitation activities. UN/CEFACT specifically encourages the collection, analysis, and monitoring of gender disaggregated data in order to better understand and support women's engagement in international trade and transport facilitation.

This Recommendation encourages governments, business communities, development partners, international organizations, and other policymakers to follow UN/CEFACT's commitment to ensure inclusiveness for women.

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