

**SPS ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ECAC)
SUMMARY REPORT OF THE THIRD VIRTUAL MEETING
02 DECEMBER 2020**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat (Mr Simon Padilla) welcomed participants and provided a brief introduction to the meeting. A list of participants is available in Annex 1.

1 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

2. Mr Frans Van Diepen, UN/CEFACT Domain Coordinator, presented the current status of UN/CEFACT work on the Implementation Guideline for e-Certificates. His [keynote presentation](#) included:

- a. An introduction to the project, its scope (i.e. SPS eCert, eQuality and eCITES permits), attributes and architectural aspects related to designing a guide for the implementation of electronic certificates;
- b. An illustration of SPS and CITES eCert procedures (i.e. Hub and point to point G2G exchange); and
- c. An update on the project's current status. The guide will be released in early 2021.

2 INFORMATION SHARING

3. The IPPC Secretariat shared information about the current status of the [ePhyto Solution](#):

- a. 95 countries are registered to the Hub, and 46 are actively exchanging certificates. Over 50,000 certificates are exchanged through the Hub each month. The Hub has a daily capacity to deal with 100,000 certificates.
- b. In 2020, the Hub was connected to the EU TRACES' system, which has facilitated the ability to use electronic signatures in phytosanitary certificates of products going into the EU. The EU intends to soon start sending ePhytos to non-EU countries through the Hub
- c. The ePhyto Industry Advisory Group is exploring the possibility to share the ePhyto data with the private sector through a channel that would work as a no-reply cc email.
- d. Currently, resources are available to support the functioning of the ePhyto System for approximately two years and a half. The IPPC is assessing and considering options to sustain the ePhyto solution in the longer term.
- e. One option is for the Hub to become an SPS Hub and exchange other SPS eCert harmonized data.

4. The WBG highlighted the importance to consider the linkages of all relevant business processes, including SPS eCert, since regulatory authorities and traders jointly take care of a large number of export and import processes and share trade information among the different agencies, including Customs. The WBG also updated members on its ongoing work to support developing countries to implement the ePhyto Solution.

5. The Codex Secretariat reminded participants that the 25th Session of the CCFICS, which was rescheduled, would be held virtually at the end of May 2021. In the meantime, the [CCFICS electronic Working Group](#) (EWG) on the elaboration of the proposed draft guidance on paperless use of electronic Certificates (e-Certificates) is continuing its work and an informal technical face-to-face virtual meeting for the EWG has been proposed to take place in March 2021.

6. The OIE updated participants on the completion of the STDF-funded [eVet project](#). The final report was published on the OIE and STDF websites. It provides an overview of eVet certification in selected OIE member countries and recommendations for the OIE on next steps including: (i) engagement with UN/CEFACT's data structure and standards; and (ii) partnering with the other standard-setting bodies (i.e. IPPC and Codex) referenced under the SPS Agreement.
7. The FAO welcomed OIE's work on eVet and highlighted the importance of strengthening coordination among the areas of food safety, animal and plant health. The WBG also noted the importance of ensuring compatibility and interoperability between different SPS eCert initiatives. On the ground, business operators view trade certification from a commodity perspective, considering all the different certification requirements for export/import together rather than isolated.
8. The FAO shared that the [Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health](#) conducted a survey on how COVID-19 has impacted the trade of animals and animal products, which highlighted the importance of eCert. The STDF Secretariat reminded members about STDF's [COVID-19 web page](#), dedicated to sharing information and documents on this topic.
9. The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF) provided information on their assistance to Morocco in implementing the [ePhyto Solution](#). The GATF is assessing options to help other developing countries adopt the Solution.
10. The WTO noted that an important number of COVID-19-related SPS notifications in 2020 concerned trade facilitating measures, including the use of eCert. It also informed that an update to the WTO paper on [COVID-19-related SPS and TBT measures](#) would be released shortly on the [WTO COVID-19 and world trade](#) dedicated web page.

3 NEXT STEPS

11. Members agreed to broaden the group and invite other interested STDF members and collaborating partners from STDF's wider network to participate in future meetings of the ECAC.
12. Participants responded to a quiz on the operational aspects and outcomes of the meeting. Quiz results indicate that: 100% of the respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the meeting; 93% saw new opportunities for collaboration or innovation on SPS e-cert; and 79% saw new opportunities to promote uptake and use of STDF's work on eCert.
13. The Secretariat proposed to invite the OIE to present the final report of the eVet project at a future meeting and thanked members for their active participation.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization	E-mail
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