

ECE/TRADE/201

Recommendation 3 ECE/TRADE/201

ISO COUNTRY CODE

for Representation of Names of Countries

At its first session, held in January 1972, the Group of Experts on Automatic Data Processing and Coding decided to include in its programme of work the following task:

“To define requirements for country codes for use in international trade, to be forwarded to ISO and to be pursued in co-operation with it”.

It was entrusted to the secretariat to pursue this task.

At a Meeting of the relevant ISO body, Working Group 2 of Technical Committee 46 “Documentation” in April 1972, it was agreed to set up a Co-ordination Committee with the task to prepare proposals regarding a list of entities, candidate numerical and alphabetical codes and maintenance arrangements. This Committee was composed of one representative each from ISO and ITU and of the UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Adviser.

The Report of the Co-ordinating Committee was accepted with some amendments by the Working Group 2 of TC 46 and a draft International Standard was elaborated which has been considered at several meetings of the Group of Experts on Automatic Data Processing and Coding. The draft International Standard was adopted at the plenary meeting of TC 46 in July 1974 and was accepted and published as an International Standard by ISO Council in September 1974.

At the 1st, 2nd and 3rd sessions of the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, a number of delegations made observations regarding possibility of using this code in international trade, as well as on the question of incompleteness of the list of names of countries and territories.

RECOMMENDATION

The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, subsidiary organ of the Committee on the Development of Trade of the Economic Commission for Europe, at its third session on 4 October 1974 adopted the following Recommendation:

The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures,

Being aware of the need of an internationally agreed code system to represent names of countries,

Considering the International Standard ISO 3166 “Codes for the representation of names of countries”

Recommendation No.3, third edition, adopted by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, Geneva January 1996 ECE/TRADE/201 [Edition 96.1].

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as a suitable basis for application in international trade,

Recommends that the two-letter alphabetic code referred to in the International Standard ISO 3166 as “ISO ALPHA-2 Country Code”, should be used for representing the names of countries for purposes of International Trade whenever there is a need for a coded alphabetical designation;

Invites the secretariat to inform the appropriate ISO body responsible for the maintenance of ISO 3166 of any amendments which the Working Party may suggest.

At that session representatives attended from: Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Czechoslovakia; Denmark; Finland; France; German Democratic Republic; Germany, Federal Republic of; Hungary; Italy; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Romania; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Kingdom; United States of America, Japan and Nigeria.

The following specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non- governmental organizations were also represented:

Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO); General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); Central Office for International Railway Transport (OCTI); International Chamber of Commerce (ICC); International Air Transport Association (IATA); International Organization for Standardization (ISO); International Union of Railways (UIC); International Chamber of Shipping (ICS); International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA). Also present at the invitation of the secretariat were staff officials of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA); the European Communities (EC) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

I. SCOPE AND FIELD OF APPLICATION

The Standard ISO 3166 sets out, in an introductory part, its scope and field of application as being to provide a two-letter and a three-letter alphabetic code, for representing the names of countries, dependencies and other areas of special geopolitical interest for purposes of international interchange, and general directions for their maintenance.

The designations “countries, dependencies, and other areas of special geopolitical interest” employed therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitations of its frontiers. The International Standard is intended for use in any application requiring the expression of entities in coded form. For the purposes of the Standard,

the term “Entity” is defined as “ the name of country, dependency, or other area of special geopolitical interest”.

II. PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDED CODES

The recommended codes are presented in two sections containing a two-letter alphabetic code, recommended for international exchange, and a three-digit numeric code. A three-letter alphabetic code is listed in the ISO 3166 Standard.

ALPHA-2 Country Code”

ISO 3166

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III. PROVISIONS FOR THE UP-DATING OF THE STANDARD

The list of countries and their code elements are subject to amendment according to the rules set out in ISO Standard 3166. A maintenance agency for ISO 3166 has been appointed, serviced by the Secretariat of ISO/TC 46

Deutscher Normenausschuss (DIN), Berlin. As required, the ECE Secretariat will provide code supplements containing the current version of the Alpha-2 code. The list below reflects the version valid on 1 January 1996.

The full text of ISO 3166, with the official names of the countries concerned are included in the Standard, which can be procured from the ISO Central Secretariat or from national ISO member bodies.

III.

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