For the ninth time in the history of AC/135, the recent AC/135 Directors’ meeting (Main Group) was hosted at the Defence Logistics Information Service in Battle Creek, Michigan (USA). Held from 12 to 14 May 2009, Main Group’s 95th meeting was attended by representatives from 34 countries including, for the first time, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Addressing AC/135 participants, US Defence Logistics Agency Director Vice Admiral THOMPSON expressed his appreciation for the added value codification provides in supporting the warfighter. He emphasized the role played by accurate codification in saving resources and providing effective logistics support to operations.

The Belgian-led mapping of NATO Stock Numbers (NSNs) against Reportable Item Codes has demonstrated that 80% of ammunition can be linked to NSNs though introduction of additional coding. The scope of this work will be broadened to include shelters and containers.

With an ever-increasing share of defence budgets being spent on contracting for services, AC/135 is considering extending the scope cataloguing beyond the “item of supply” concept to include services. In response to requests from the logistics community to have volumetric data reported under NSNs, the codification data set will be extended to include, in particular, weight, cubage, item dimensions and package dimensions. Logisticians need this data for use in operations planning, transportation and warehousing.

Performance analysis on codification requests shows that 80% of all requests are completed within 60 days. The majority of rejects are due to reference numbers not being recognized by manufacturers. A second cause is inadequate implementation of the codification clause in defence contracts. Greater focus on partnering with industry will ensure that both sides benefit from the NCS.

The Chairman of AC/135 congratulated to Mr Paul Kenworthy from the Australian NCB on having been awarded an Australia Day Medallion for outstanding services in the area of defence for almost 30 years, primarily in support of the codification of defence assets.

The next Main Group Meeting will be hosted by the Austrian NCB in Vienna from 10 to 12 November 2009.

Modernisation & Simplification

NAMSA, in cooperation with Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom, is to investigate the possibility of exchanging the technical documentation associated with codification requests via the NATO MailBox System (NMBS). If the result of the feasibility study is positive, National Codification Bureaux will be able to reduce their use of other transfer media for exchanging technical descriptions, manuals and images.

Research into generating codification records from STEP data will continue with UK NCB leading the work. Phase 3 of the Smart STEP Codification Project aims to employ ISO 8000 exchange methods to fully codify items using electronic Product Data Management files and to return data to suppliers in ISO 22745 format together with the resulting NSN. In the new codification project for the “TERRIER” Combat Engineering Vehicle (CEV), a SSC Phase 3 tool will be used to codify, in parallel with traditional cataloguing methods.

A cost benefit analysis will be performed to quantify savings expected from SSC implementation. In addition to facilitating data collection for cataloguing, SSC is expected to increase data accuracy and to
reduce turnaround times. Manufacturers and suppliers will be able to reduce the time needed to provide data compliant with the defence contract requirements of STANAG 4177.

As part of a modernization effort, Brazil, USA and NAMSA are exploring the possibility of implementing XML in the NCS. Codification software providers have responded positively and consider this approach to be relevant and feasible for implementation. Other modernization efforts underway involve the introduction of images in NMCRLplus and a more intuitive naming of reference number combinations in order to make NMCRLplus easier to use.

Non-NATO Countries’ Involvement in NCS

The recent NATO summit in Strasbourg highlighted the importance of engaging partner countries in dialogue and cooperation. Through its Sponsorship Programme, AC/135 is a leading group in this area.

The recently established criteria for Tier 2 certification provide that only Tier 1 sponsored nations may apply for Tier 2 Sponsorship. As a rule, a nation must be at Tier 1 level for at least one full year before applying for Tier 2 level Sponsorship and all the necessary bilateral agreements (with DNK, FRA, DEU, ITA, GBR and USA) must be in place. The candidate country is required to have minimum of 100 NATO Stock Numbers in the national inventory and to have produced codification data for at least six months. Provided these criteria are met, Tier 2 status is granted – subject to AC/135 approval – after successful completion of tests. These include a series of codification transactions to which the candidate country must respond in accordance with NATO Codification rules. Testing is performed by a group of volunteer countries and by NAMSA. Malaysia’s codification system is currently being tested for Tier 2 compliance.

Albania and Croatia joined the Alliance as NATO members in April. Thirty-thee nations have currently been approved for NCS sponsorship, and recent additions were Bosnia and Herzegovina. Applications from Montenegro and Brunei Darussalam are being considered by AC/135 Main Group.

The Pacific Area Cataloguing Seminar (PACS) has been actively promoting use of NCS by countries in Asian, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. China is envisaging implementing NCS classification and naming based on ACodP-2/3. PACS has contributed to AC/135’s quality efforts by proposing the use of benchmarking to improve quality. Generally speaking, while codification systems work well, problems are frequently encountered with the data itself.

The Premier Catalogue of References for Logistics

The user interface with the NATO Master Catalogue of References for Logistics (NMCRL) is now available in twelve languages and a German version is currently being developed. Forthcoming enhancements will include integration of the multilingual directory of groups and classes and the availability of item names from a single point of entry: www.natolog.com. A new “SCAGE tool” supports the generation of Commercial and Governmental Entity codes (CAGE codes) for manufacturers and suppliers from non-NATO countries. This user-friendly web-based tool screens application data against the CAGE database and sends e-mail confirmation of new S-type CAGE codes to requesters.

The links between Item Names Codes and the Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) have been successfully finalised by the United States in collaboration with ECCMA and will be accessible via NMCRLplus. A new web-based codification forum will soon be available to share opinions, ask questions, seek advice and to provide feedback on NMCRL functionality. The forum will be accessible to NMCRL subscribers in the 3rd quarter of 2009.

11th International Symposium on Codification

AC/135 appreciates all the interest expressed in 11th Symposium on Codification. However, AC/135 has re-considered the organization of the 11th Symposium on Codification in May 2010 and decided to postpone Symposium for one year because of the current economic environment and involvement in numerous resource demanding projects. AC/135 will continue preparation themed on “Codification & Master Data Management” for organizing Symposium in 2011, in conjunction with the remarkable anniversary of 100th meeting of AC/135 Main Group. The Symposium announcements will communicate more details for your planning.