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Agenda item 3 (b) (i)

Update of the United Nations Practical Manual  
on Transfer Pricing for Developing Countries

**1.7. Transfer Pricing in Domestic Law**

**Introduction**

1.7.1. Article 9 (“Associated Enterprises”) of tax treaties typically only regulates the basic conditions for adjustment of transfer pricing and corresponding adjustments in case of double taxation. The Article advises the application of the arm’s length principle but does not go into the particulars of transfer pricing rules. It is generally understood that Article 9 is not “self-

**Safe harbours**

1.7.5. There are countries which have “safe harbour” rules providing that if a taxpayer meets certain criteria it is exempt from the application of a particular rule, or at least exempt from scrutiny as to whether the rule has been met. The intention is to increase taxpayer certainty and reduce taxpayer compliance costs, but also to reduce the administration’s costs of collection, as well as allowing the administration to concentrate scarce audit and other resources on those cases where more is likely to be at stake in terms of non-compliance and revenue.

1.7.6.

**Documentation**

1.7.9. Another important issue for implementing domestic laws is the documentation requirement associated with transfer pricing. Tax authorities need a variety of business documents which support the application of the arm's length principle by specified taxpayers. However, there is some divergence of legislation in terms of the nature of documents required, penalties imposed, and the degree of the examiners' authority to collect information when taxpayers fail to produce such documents. There is also the issue of whether documentation needs to be "contemporaneous", as noted above.

1.7.10. In deciding on the requirements for such documentation there needs to be, as already noted, recognition of the compliance costs imposed on taxpayers required to produce the documentation. Another issue is whether the benefits, if any, of the documentation requirements from the administration's

balance between the interests of the revenue and of taxpayers in mind when setting an extended period during which adjustments can be made.

### **Domestic transfer pricing rules and tax treaties**

1.7.13. Both developed and developing countries need to have domestic transfer pricing rules to counter transfer pricing manipulation and also need the associated enterprises article of tax treaties (usually Article 9) which is relevant to avoidance and elimination of double taxation due to transfer pricing adjustments. One view is that the associated enterprises article of a tax treaty provides a separate and independent domestic basis for making transfer pricing adjustments. The contrary view is that tax treaties do not increase a country's tax jurisdiction and consequently the associated enterprises article of a country's tax treaties cannot provide a separate source of tax jurisdiction. The detail in such domestic laws will vary from country to country and will often vary depending on how advanced the country is in its transfer pricing journey.

1.7.14. One view is that a country's tax jurisdiction, usually some mixture of residence and source-based taxation, is based on its domestic legislation and that when two countries enter into a tax treaty with each other they agree to mutually modify the exercise of their respective taxing rights to prevent double taxation. A tax treaty is in this respect a mechanism to allocate the taxing rights to prevent double taxation arising from the overlap of residence and source jurisdiction. Tax treaties operate by altering the operation of domestic tax law; by either excluding the operation of the domestic tax law of a treaty country or by requiring a treaty country to provide a credit against its domestic tax for tax paid in the other treaty country. The generally held view is that under a tax treaty a tax obligation exists if the requirements of the



Article 7(4) previously explicitly permitted the use of the apportionment of total profit by countries customarily using it, provided the result was consistent with the arm's length principle, but this has been removed from the latest (2010) version of the OECD Model in a major re-write of Article 7.

1.8.5. The UN Model contains similar provisions to the OECD Model in Article 9 (at Paragraph 1 especially) and therefore serves as a guide for applying the arm's length principle for developing countries. However the UN Model also includes an additional paragraph (Article 9(3)) which stipulates

