United Nations

Administrative Committee on Coordination

30 October 1998

English only

Report of the Information Systems Coordination Committee on its sixth session

Geneva, 27–30 October 1998

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   The Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) held its sixth session from 27 to 30 October 1998 at the International Labour Office (ILO) at Geneva.

2.   Opening the session, the new Chairperson, Giuseppe Pace (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) whose term of office runs from October 1998 through September 2000, introduced a number of new participants and invited ILO to give a welcoming statement.

3.   The agenda adopted by the Committee is contained in annex I, the list of participants in annex II.

II. Matters for endorsement or approval by the Organizational Committee

Information infrastructure

4.   ISCC recommends that with respect to the expansion of Internet-based services, the following be endorsed:

(a)   Each agency should identify a senior official as a "sponsor"[1] for the ExtraNet (bearing in mind that the ExtraNet has already been authorized at the highest level by the ACC);

(b)   The "sponsor" in each agency should arrange administrative and staff notices to make it known that capacity for electronic information-sharing exists, identify priority areas and arrange to get information posted;

(c)   Each ACC member agency should be requested to identify an "information steward"[2] for the Executive Information Network (EINet).

5.   ISCC recommends that with respect to director services, ACC consider a short statement intended to influence and harmonize policies to assure a consistent value for ExtraNet content, to be prepared by ISCC and endorsed electronically for the spring 1999 meeting of the Organizational Committee (OC).

Modernization of dissemination of information

6.   ISCC recommends that with respect to library-related matters, ACC endorse that, to the extent possible, all agencies of the United Nations system with requirements for commercial electronic information products should participate in the "United Nations consortium", which has United Nations Headquarters as lead agency.

Matters considered during the closed session and other business

7.   ISCC recommends that Jerry Barton (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)) Head of the Office of Information Management, IAEA Division of Scientific and Technical Information, be appointed as the next Secretary of ISCC for a term of office of two years. Future selection boards for the Secretary of ISCC will normally be formed at the prior ISCC session, with gender balance mandated, and a copy of the vacancy notice, to include the deadline for applications, will be distributed at that time, in addition to any official distribution to agencies by the Office of Human Resources Management.

8.   The seventh session of ISCC will be held during the week of 13 to 18 September 1999 in New York, close to the dates of the International Computing Centre (ICC) Management Committee meeting, with the possibility of an interim meeting in spring 1999 by video conference. ISCC documents will no longer be issued on paper but posted on the Web site and their availability announced by E-mail.

9.   ISCC adopted new methods for designing its work programme, which will feature "special interest groups", without budgetary resources as such. Task forces will be used for time-limited activities and a proposal prepared for ACC concerning products migrated to an operational phase.

10.   ISCC wishes to invite the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) and the United Nations Offices of Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna to be members of the Committee.

III. Summary of actions taken and decisions adopted by the Committee

Information infrastructure

11.   ISCC recommends that with respect to the expansion of Internet-based services:

(a)   All agencies adopt the following standards and recommended (best) practices (SARPs) with respect to the ExtraNet now being established:

(i)   For security reasons, the use of a secure sockets layer (SSL) is mandatory;

(ii)   Each agency must follow a series of technical standards of the ExtraNet working group (as and when issued) to become an ExtraNet "node", accepting the ExtraNet model as a whole;

(iii) Consistency in Internet protocol addresses (with respect to proxy servers) must be followed for authentication to work;

(b) Use be made of the United Nations consortium (on information products) as an element of providing common services, the Task Force on Expanded Internet Services (TF/NET) being charged with the task of ensuring, in cooperation with the Task Force on Inter-library Cooperation Standards and Management (TF/LIB) that these information products become part of the ExtraNet service, where possible;

(c) All agency Webmasters include on their own Web pages, which provide searching of their agency-specific information, a hyperlink in close proximity allowing Web users to search on a wider system basis (in this regard the Secretary of ISCC is authorized to contact directly agency Webmasters to get this done copying the ISCC focal point).

12. ISCC recommends that with respect to directory services:

(a) Lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) is the appropriate technology for United Nations system-wide directory services;

(b) The Task Force on Directory Services (TF/DIR) is charged with the objectives of:

(i) Continuation of the technical test, and possible expansion to a full pilot;

(ii) Preparation of directory information base definitions, with priority given to a United Nations person object schema, proposed ISCC standards being deliverables to be endorsed by electronic circulation;

(c) Awareness be promoted of the potential benefits of a system-wide directory, and the technical, procedural and policy issues associated with implementing such a directory service;

(d) Organizations initiate steps to create directories based on authoritative personnel information, and obtain clearance for sharing information on the ExtraNet in accordance with each agency's policies.

Modernization of dissemination of information

13. ISCC recommends that with respect to library-related matters:

(a) More agencies with libraries be encouraged to participate in the activities facilitated by TF/LIB;

(b) The database of the Depository Libraries System (DEPOLIB) be placed into production as one more element of "one-stop shopping" for United Nations system information, it being understood that participating agencies themselves are responsible for database updates (which will not be undertaken by the ISCC secretariat);

(c) Consideration be continued of production matters related to the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System (UNCAPS), through a quality assurance steering committee composed of representatives of the participating agencies, thus ensuring that ISCC task force involvement is time-limited;

(d) The service of Tahani El-Erian, Chief Librarian of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, who is scheduled to retire, be noted with appreciation.

Opportunities for inter-agency cooperation

14. ISCC recommends that with respect to telecommunications, the Secretary of ISCC advise the Inter-Agency Telecommunications Advisory Committee (ITAC) to prepare proposals for consideration by ACC on how to converge into ISCC, starting in 2000.

Matters considered during the closed session and other business

15. ISCC recommends that with respect to the year 2000 problem (Y2K):

(a) An awareness campaign be encouraged within each agency, to include the preparation of contingency plans, certification of compliance and bringing the matter to the attention of States;

(b) Any system-wide reporting of status be with respect only to critical systems, with ratings of strong, medium and weak, determined by agencies themselves;

(c) Each agency update the status of its Y2K situation (on the restricted Web site) every three months, as from 1 December 1998, until 1 March 2000;

(d) Each agency nominate a Y2K project leader who reports within the agency itself to a steering committee or to top management.

16. ISCC recommends that with respect to approval of recommendations between sessions:

(a) Approval by a majority be obtained by electronic circulation;

(b) Each member Organization respond within a time-frame defined within the message, or else it will be considered to concur;

(c) This mechanism be used whenever the Chairperson expects that consensus will be obtainable and speed of decision-making is desirable;

(d)   For items where consensus is not easy to obtain, the option be considered to hold an interim session of ISCC by video conference.

17.   ISCC recommends that with respect to E-mail:

(a)   Attachments be used sparingly;

(b)   Where deemed necessary, they be sent in earlier versions of text-processing formats which were announced at the session (and which can be advised upon request by the Secretary of ISCC) or in HTML format, which can be read by the popular Web browsers and some leading E-mail software in contemporary usage.

IV. Summary of discussions

18.   Discussions at the sixth session were organized around the approved elements of the ISCC work programme for the current biennium: information infrastructure, improved access to information, modernization of dissemination of information and opportunities for inter-agency cooperation, as described below.

A. Information infrastructure

19.   Jerry Barton (IAEA) presented the report of TF/NET (ACC/1998/ISCC/6).

20.   A demonstration of the proto-type ExtraNet followed, showing general information, commercial information products under licence and professional workbenches for various staff members throughout the United Nations system of organizations.

21.   Discussion of the Task Force recommendations followed. Some focal points sought clarification of the roles of "sponsors" of the ExtraNet and "information stewards" within the member agencies, and possible overlap of responsibilities. It was pointed out that information stewards must have knowledge as an authority for the content, while sponsors may be dissemination agents. The actual implementation of these roles would be left to the individual organizations. Various models were available. Some agencies might choose to assign those responsibilities to separate individuals, while others would not. In some agencies, an office (rather than an individual) could assume those roles.

22.   With regard to specification of the human and other resources necessary to participate in the ExtraNet, further testing was suggested. One of the outputs from the pilot project will be a management-oriented report on a framework

for the "business case" for the ExtraNet, including both benefits and requirements resources. In addition, many agencies already have experience in mounting Intranets for their own use, and could judge the level of resources likely to be needed for the ExtraNet from this. In most cases, the cost should be marginal.

23.   With respect to marketing of the ExtraNet and of the participating agencies mobility system (PAMS) in particular, it was felt that where agencies had skills inventory databases already in place, information could be uploaded from these databases by staff in order to complete their submissions through PAMS. This will be considered in the PAMS phase II design.

24.   The ExtraNet should become a dynamic operation with information provided by organizations throughout the United Nations system. Agencies themselves should be encouraged to define the business case for participation.

25.   Continuing the discussion, a review was conducted of more details of what is expected to be mounted on the ExtraNet and what remaining work assignments including PAMS (phase II) and any proposed education grant system (in cooperation with the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ)) would be undertaken before the end of the biennium.

26.   A valuable suggestion was made to have an inventory list of various databases (some of which are currently fee based) from United Nations organizations which could be made available to sister agencies over the ExtraNet. A general discussion of the requirements of the high-level Executive Information Network (EINet) concluded the discussion.

27.   The Secretary of ISCC made a presentation on the revised Web sites of the ACC subsidiary machinery, focusing on the ISCC Intranet.

28.   Stephen Geis (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)), Chairperson of TF/DIR, presented its report (ACC/1998/ISCC/5).

29.   There will be policy issues associated with authorizing the sharing of limited personnel information, even if access is restricted within the United Nations system by the ExtraNet. These issues, together with procedural issues related to linking the directories to organizations' human resources systems, which are the authoritative repositories of personnel information, are likely to be more challenging than the technical issues and will require action within each agency. It was reported that the Assistant Secretary-General for Support Services had recently authorized the use of telephone directory data from the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) system for the pilot project.

30. Turning to a discussion of the recommendations, it was clarified that technically it is possible to search directory information, such as would be provided in an LDAP scheme, by searching other than by name. One of the findings of the ExtraNet consultant (see TF/NET report) had been that agencies would like to have this search capability. However, that remains a policy question for each agency to decide.

31. It was felt that in the first instance, ISCC could market the use of an LDAP scheme to its member agencies, but in the final analysis there was also the option, rarely used, of mandating its use.

32. The proposal to draw data from human resources system was felt to be a good approach and widely supported.

33. The recommendations were adopted as modified slightly (see sects. II and III above), particularly emphasizing that the Task Force should proceed to prepare a short strategy paper for the high-level attention of ACC. Electronic means will be used to obtain a consensus among ISCC with a view to having it ready for ACC consideration at its spring 1999 meeting. The paper would, *inter alia*, urge top management to endorse a position to provide directory services, readily accessible throughout the United Nations system of organizations.

34. ISCC next invited ITU to open a discussion on aspects of administrative and management systems, including evaluation of the results of a query which had been done recently, with a view to including administrative and management information systems issues in the future work programme of ISCC for a proposed task force.

35. Wolfgang Wolhlleber (ITU), ISCC focal point-designate, pointed out that a large majority of agencies (15 of 19 responding) will re-evaluate their human resources and/or financial systems soon. It was felt that in this regard, elements of work such as data harmonization and process harmonization could be included in any proposed work of a future task force. It was pointed out that a re-engineering of processes would normally also be done by agencies when re-evaluating major systems for new implementations.

36. There followed a discussion on issues related to enterprise-wide information systems, including whether to do a unified solution for both human resources and finance operations, "buy versus build" issues (many agencies pointed out they were considering commercial implementations), and how much integration should be sought in such systems.

37. The meeting discussed whether it should seek to authorize a "jump start" of this work in the current biennium and not wait. It was felt that certain tasks related to information-sharing on evaluation of business processes, projects already undertaken or about to be undertaken could

be arranged under ISCC auspices in 1999 at minimum cost. As for altering the work programme, this might need to be considered in the context of what priorities would be determined for the next biennium in the closed session.

38. In that last analysis, it was felt that the most important tasks in this area are to: recommend practices for evaluation of business process requirements for enterprise management systems; provide a "road map" of steps to be followed by agencies; promote harmonization of enterprise management tools; and identify opportunities for common data definitions, especially drawing on work already done within the United Nations system.

39. One approach would be to organize an ISCC discussion board early in 1999 on administrative and management systems, which would meet by video conference and use an electronic discussion group. The need to include key players from CCAQ(PER) and CCAQ(FB) in any fact-finding exercise was recognized.

40. In line with the growing trend for United Nations organizations to reach out to civil society for dialogue and ideas, Rolf Graf, Head of the Corporate and Institutional Banking System, Deutsche Bank AG kindly agreed to join the meeting by video conference from his offices at Frankfurt am Main. He made a presentation on an actual ExtraNet implementation in the corporate sector.

B. Modernization of dissemination of information

41. Eleanor Frierson (ILO), as Chairperson of TF/LIB, and colleagues presented the report of the Task Force (ACC/1998/ISCC/7).

42. Afterwards, there was a demonstration of the new version of UNCAPS, which uses Site Search software, and of DEPOLIB. This was followed by an extensive presentation on the work of the United Nations consortium, which has United Nations Headquarters as the lead agency. It included details of the ILO case study on use of the consortium both for cost avoidance and for cost-saving. Importantly, data were available on cost avoidance by consortium members, especially the case of New York, where it had been possible to include missions in the consortium arrangements.

43. ISCC next turned to questions concerning the various systems which had been demonstrated. In response to a question concerning similarities between UNCAPS and UNIONS, it was clarified that the underlying data being searched are different due to the former being associated with databases and the latter with Web sites of the United Nations

system. UNCAPS sought to take advantage of off-the-shelf software, whereas UNIONS interfaces with the existing search engines of the various agencies.

44. Clarification was also provided on differences between the public view of UNCAPS and the view of the databases for professional library staff. Both UNCAPS and DEPOLIB, it was pointed out, are currently being hosted at ICC. It was felt that UNCAPS, in particular, was one more way in which agencies could publish data for their user community. The view was expressed that UNCAPS is a big step forward, but on the document delivery side is not as useful as could be. It was pointed out that work is planned during the biennium to provide links to full text and multimedia, as well as linkage to the DEPOLIB system. A further report would be provided on progress in this area in 1999.

45. The Task Force and the United Nations, as lead agency, were congratulated on their work in facilitating the United Nations consortium, which is an example of how inter-agency bodies should work to achieve real cost savings. It was felt important to deliver information to the desktop, and that marketing of the systems as well as training should not be forgotten.

46. Before turning to the recommendations of TF/LIB, ISCC considered issues related to the production status of these systems and operational aspects, which some members felt remained unresolved issues. The Chairperson indicated that for the moment those systems could still be viewed as working prototypes, with the understanding that a working group would examine, within a wider context than just the work of one task force, ways and means to transfer such systems to operational status, including what functions would be the responsibility of data owners and what minimum support functions need to be assured, including models for funding mechanisms that could be considered. It was pointed out that provisions for software maintenance, help desk facilities and follow-up to ensure that timely database updating took place would need to be assured for all systems.

47. The recommendations of the Task Force were endorsed, with the understanding that the wider issues raised in the discussion would be taken up separately as generic issues applicable to all task forces.

48. The keynote address of the ISCC session was given by Stefano Baldi, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations Office at Geneva, on the requirements of cyber-diplomats.

C. Improved access to information

49. Denise Pelissier (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) presented the report of the Task Force on Document Management (TF/DOM) (ACC/1998/ISCC/4), with her comments.

50. Anthony Salmon (UNCC) and colleagues presented plans for a document management system in the Commission. ISCC was joined by task force members based in Washington, Paris, Vienna and Rome by video conference.

51. Dominique Pittet (ITU) and colleagues spoke next concerning implementation of the system within ITU.

52. Following this, it was pointed out that in 1999, TF/DOM planned to concentrate on meta-data, security aspects and how to bring field offices into contemporary document management techniques.

D. Opportunities for inter-agency cooperation

53. Jay Rushby (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) presented the report of ITAC (ACC/1998/ISCC/8).

54. In the ensuing discussion, ISCC was briefed on the historic and existing arrangements for secretariat support for ITAC. Practical issues, such as limited funding in support of ITAC meetings, including secretariat support, were raised. To date, it was the host organization of the ITAC meeting which provided support, but between meetings, maintenance of databases and list servers in support of ITAC work (for example, a database of video conference facilities regardless of where it is housed) needed to be assured, and follow-up regarding agreed target dates being met was needed.

55. Members debated how best to bring ITAC into the mainstream of the ACC machinery without creating separate budgets and give it needed support, but in such a manner as not to stifle initiative by sub-sets of agencies acting cooperatively and effectively, or to hinder the very necessary technical discussions needed.

56. It was suggested that ITAC work towards a convergence by the start of the next biennium to coordinate their efforts with ISCC, cross-breed experience between the field of information technology and telecommunications, make ACC fully aware of strategic directions which the United Nations system should be taking and benefit from joint efforts, where pragmatic.

57. ISCC and ITAC, it was felt, should operate in such a way that there is no duplication of effort and report to ACC or high-level CCAQ, giving specific action-oriented recommendations on matters which benefit substantially all agencies and warrant endorsement of top management from every agency. The

effectiveness of ITAC depends on individuals involved with operational telecommunication matters. Indeed, it was felt there should not be any duplication of effort also between ISCC, ITAC and United Nations Common Services in New York (which might be extended to the whole United Nations system).

58. The Chairperson proposed that ITAC be advised to prepare proposals for ACC consideration, through ISCC, on how to converge into ISCC. Based on comments from the floor during the discussion, this proposal should contain options which, *inter alia*, include:

(a) Not creating ITAC as a task force but an ongoing mechanism;

(b) Meeting in parallel with or just prior to ISCC, with a joint session scheduled at the ISCC meeting for ITAC matters;

(c) Changing the facilitator of ITAC meetings from the United Nations Secretariat in New York to the (jointly financed) ISCC secretariat at Geneva;

(d) Relying on ITAC to contribute its expertise to ISCC in order that the part of the ISCC mandate relating to telecommunications may be given attention;

(e) Converging in such a way as not to impede the rapid response required in certain areas of telecommunications by encumbering ITAC with very formal approval mechanisms, except for a very limited number of strategic plans which warrant high-level endorsement or involve funding requests impacting the ISCC zero-growth situation.

59. The meeting next turned, in closed session, to consideration of a draft work programme and budget for 2000–2001 (ACC/1998/ISCC/10).

60. Opening the consideration of the budget, the following introductory statements were made to facilitate the discussion; synopses of which are:

(a) To assess those activities that ISCC should undertake in this biennium, it was considered the following are necessary:

(i) ISCC should ensure that its task forces are strictly time-limited and focused upon specific tasks and outputs, this being the basis upon which ISCC's working mechanism was originally established;

(ii) Furthermore, for ISCC to become more effective and efficient, the number of task forces should also be limited;

(iii) The activities undertaken by ISCC in its work programme should be assessed for their relative

importance and value, and priorities assigned to them to decide which can be undertaken within the budget;

(b) TF/DIR should be used as a model for a task force: limited duration, small membership, specific product and then completed;

(c) Once a pilot or prototype has been built, it should be handed to a service provider for the operational phase, since ACC clearly endorsed a policy that ISCC should not undertake operational tasks in its summary of conclusions (ACC/1993/28), and also endorsed the approach underlying the Task Force's (senior-level Task Force on Information Systems) recommendations that different mechanisms should be utilized, on the one hand, to advise and support ACC in the exercise of responsibilities with regard to the coordination of information systems (being ISCC) and, on the other, to undertake operational tasks, such as publications and databases;

(d) It was also felt that ISCC should clearly identify issues related to the budget for ACC consideration, including the need to go into production for finished products with different models of how to finance their operation, the time being right for the ISCC products which are creating value added for the entire United Nations system;

(e) It was suggested that activities on interests of an ongoing nature should be handled by a working group or special interest group.

61. The Secretary of ISCC then presented a draft budget for the 2000–2001 biennium (ACC/1998/ISCC/10), it being understood that final budget parameters had not been received from the United Nations budget office.

62. In the ensuing closed discussion, a full debate took place of various ways to organize the budget, set priorities, add value, separate activities which are operational, make task forces time limited, chooses membership of task forces, establish review groups, define what operational means etc. The possibility of establishing (short-term) task forces and (longer-term) mechanisms which would not be task forces but would examine issues agreed as being worthy of ISCC consideration but without a budget (except for video conferencing) was raised.

63. These groups could spawn, with ISCC concurrence, task forces for specific priorities. The question of identifying better the "client base" for end products of the ISCC was explored at some length.

64. It was decided to form an ad hoc review group (for the current session only) to develop broad guidelines, identifying areas which require special consideration, look at the "operational problem", develop criteria to determine how to

categorize activities into those which are essential as "value added" for the United Nations system and those which are discretionary. The group was led by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), composed of various agencies and was joined by the Chairperson of ISCC.

65.   The ad hoc review group presented a proposal for a revised methodology in designing the ISCC work programme and budget. The budget will be organized around broad themes identified as special interest groups (SIGs). Agencies will identify which SIGs they will participate in; agencies may join or leave SIGs at any time.

66.   SIGs will prepare indicative tasks using the current draft budget as a base with additions and modifications. Any SIG will not have budget resources as such, except for video conferencing and limited life task forces (TFs) which it spawns. A proposal for a TF must be prepared with life cycle details (client agencies, value added, development resources, production by service provider other than the ISCC secretariat, sunset provision). The TF will make its report to ISCC and not to the SIG

67.   Criteria: each member organization will assign a value for task proposals from its own perspective: 3=extremely important; 2=important; 1=relevant; and 0=minor or not relevant.

68.   Factors which agencies should consider in assigning values are: short-term strategy, long-term strategy, operational, financial considerations, governance, constituency concerns, standards, "market appeal" and feasibility (an explanation of these factors will be posted on the ISCC Web site).

69.   Timing: the budget will be organized around SIGs. For purposes of preparing the budget, interested agencies will be asked to submit a "snapshot" of tasks which would be performed were the SIGs to be formed now. It is understood that actual TFs will only be formed as authorized by the ISCC during the biennium, and will depend upon priorities which may shift between now and then.

70.   Indicative tasks will be solicited during the first half of November 1998. Agencies will prepare rankings during the last half of November. The budget will be redrafted on the basis of a combination of the summary of the rankings and a summary of the number of agencies expressing interest. The redrafted budget will be posted to the ISCC Web site in December 1998, and a transatlantic video conference held to consider it (as the only agenda item for that video conference).

71.   Specific themes: each SIG will be chaired by the ISCC focal point from the lead agency. Any TF spawned by a SIG may be chaired by whomever it is deemed to be most

appropriate, focal point or not (again, it is emphasized that a TF will make its report to ISCC, not the SIG). The "flavour" of each SIG is defined as follows:

(a)   Telecommunications (SIG/COM):   ITAC will be asked to prepare indicative tasks before their November 1998 meeting. ITAC should converge towards SIG/COM starting January 2000;

(b)   Library and Information Systems (SIG/LIS): library system, information management and information services;

(c)   Document and Archive Systems (SIG/DAS): document management, archives and records management;

(d)   Interest Technologies (SIG/NET): Internet, Intranet and ExtraNet;

(e)   Strategies, Resources and Management (SIG/SRM): information technology strategy and planning, information technology staffing, enterprise resource management, non-staff resources, MIS/EIS and knowledge management.

72.   "Operational" aspects of ISCC: a proposal will be prepared for ACC, outlining several options (not just one) which could be considered to fund those production services which meet the following criteria: of benefit to substantially all agencies (not necessarily 100 per cent), and which require a "home of last resort" because of their value added to the United Nations system as a whole.

73.   ISCC turned to the selection of the next Secretary of ISCC (see sect. II above for recommendations in this regard).

74.   Turning to resolution of the Y2K problem, the Secretary of ISCC introduced the subject, referring to ACC/1998/ISCC/9. He invited Eduardo Gelbstein (ICC) to brief the session on the recent Y2K summit held in London, which he attended on behalf of the United Nations.

75.   In the ensuing discussion, there was a general consensus that detailed information on every system in every agency need not be made public. Rather, what was needed was public information of a high quality which disclosed the situation but was not alarmist. Member agencies need to continue to map out the job which has to be done and proceed on a steady course to finish efforts which are already well under way.

76.   Summing up the discussion, it was felt that awareness of the problem should continue to be pursued, bringing the matter to the full attention of States. Contingency plans should be put into place, certification should be sought by external auditors and close monitoring in each agency should be assured.

77.   While the United Nations is responsible for preparing the report to the General Assembly and was already preparing material vis-à-vis the situation within States, ISCC would provide the United Nations with information on the internal situation within the United Nations system within the parameters of the recommendation in this regard which are listed elsewhere in the present report.

78.   Continuing to consider the matter regarding the approval mechanism for ISCC recommendations between sessions, it was felt that a mechanism was needed for approval of items between session where it is fairly certain that a broad consensus is easy to obtain and speed is desirable. This would enable ISCC to turn around decisions more rapidly and proceed to other business within the various task forces.

79.   Resuming in open session, Norman Sanders (UNOPS) and André Spatz (UNICEF) led a discussion on the role of Chief Information Officer. This was indicated, not only further to the agenda at the fifth session but also in response to high-level CCAQ, which had recommended that all agencies create such posts.

80.   There followed a discussion on standards for E-mail attachments in inter-agency communication.

E. Other business

81.   The seventh session was planned as part of a wider discussion on frequency and length of meetings and the possibility of video conferences between sessions to consider specific agenda items, such as task force reports. It was agreed to distribute documents only via the Web, with their availability announced by E-mail.

82.   Among agenda items will be:

        (a)   A presentation by Robert Lewis on a theme of "wide interest";

        (b)   A presentation by the On-Line Computer Library Centre on its large-scale operation.

83.   The Committee expressed its gratitude to John Northcut for the highly professional support he had provided during his term as Secretary of ISCC. His work and dedication to the institutional coordination function of the Committee was outstanding; and there was general consensus from the members on the need to put on record this note of appreciation for his valuable contribution to meeting the mandate of ISCC.

84.   The report of this session was reviewed and amended.

Notes

[1] A "sponsor" (for the ExtraNet) is defined as an individual who acts as a "dissemination agent" within each United Nations system organization to ensure that electronic information, both from and to sister organizations, is made available.

[2] An "information steward" (for the ExtraNet) is defined as an individual who is an authoritative source for contact, including that of a sensitive nature, to be shared between executive heads.

Annex I

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Information infrastructure:

   (a) Report of the Task Force on Expanded Internet-based Services (ACC/1998/ISCC/6);

   (b) Consideration of the Task Force on Expanded Internet-based Services recommendations;

   (c) Presentation of the revised Web sites of the ACC subsidiary machinery;

   (d) Report of the Task Force on Directory Services (ACC/1998/ISCC/5);

   (e) Consideration of Task Force on Directory Services recommendations;

   (f) Discussion on aspects of administrative and management systems;

   (g) Presentation by Deutsche Bank on actual ExtraNet implementation and use.

4. Modernization of dissemination of information:

   (a) Report of the Task Force on Inter-library Cooperation, Standards and Management (ACC/1998/ISCC/7);

   (b) Consideration of Task Force recommendations;

   (c) Presentation on the requirements of cyber-diplomats.

5. Improved access to information:

   (a) Report of the Task Force on Document Management Technology (ACC/1998/ISCC/4 and 12);

   (b) Presentation on actual document management implementation by the United Nations Compensation Commission;

   (c) Presentation on actual document management implementation by the International Telecommunication Union;

   (d) Report of the Inter-Agency Telecommunications Advisory Committee (ACC/1998/ISCC/8).

6. Consideration of draft work programme and budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (ACC/1998/ISCC/10).

7. Nomination of the next Secretary of the Committee.

8. Approval mechanism for Committee recommendations between sessions.

9. Resolution of the year 2000 problem (ACC/1998/ISCC/9).

10. Role of the Chief Information Officer.

11. Discussion on standards for E-mail attachments in inter-agency communication.

12. Date and venue for the seventh session, including frequency of future sessions.

13. Other business.

Annex II

List of participants

Chairperson (FAO)	Giuseppe **Pace**[*]
IAEA	Denise Löhner[*]
	Jerry Barton
IBRD	Martin Getzendanner
ICAO	Albert Pelsser[*]
IFAD	Massimo Aureli[*]
ILO	Nadim Habra[*]
	Eleanor Frierson
IMF	Robert Kline
ITU	Wolfgang Wohlleber
	Stephen Geis
United Nations	Angela Kane[*]
UNCTAD	Paul Robertsons[*]
UNDCP	Anders Norsker[*]
UNDP	Lawrence Yeung
UNESCO	Denise Pelissier
UNFPA	Gilles Saint-Pierre[*]
UNICEF	André Spatz[*]
	Howard Dale
UNHCR	Clive Chin[*]
	Magdi Elias
UNOPS	Norman Sanders[*]
UPU	David Reid
WFP	Karl-Erik Svahn[*]
	György Konda
WHO	David Berg
WIPO	Yves Le Borgne
WMO	Jairo Granados-Fernandez[*]
WTO	Ghassan Karam[*]
ISCC	John Northcut
	Victoria Durrer-Gasse

---

[*] ISCC focal point.

Observers

ICC	Edward Gelbstein
	Andreas Christoforides
UNAIDS	Pradeep Kumar
UNCC	Anthony Salmon
UNOG	Marguerite Burnett
UNON	Mehmet Icagasi

Agencies not in attendance

IMO, ITC, UNEP, UNIDO, UNJSPF, UNOV, UNRWA, UNU.