



**Administrative Committee on
Coordination**

26 October 1999

English only

**Report of the Information Systems Coordination Committee
on its seventh session**

**New York, 15-17 September 1999 and, via videoconference,
21 October 1999**

The Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) is a subsidiary organ of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Its objectives include recommending strategic initiatives in information management and information technology for the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. The Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) held its seventh session from 15 to 17 September 1999 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The work of the seventh session was concluded during a videoconference of the full Committee on 21 October 1999.
2. Opening the session, the Chairperson, Mr. 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 Mr. Joseph Connor, Under-Secretary-General for Management, to give a welcoming statement. The agenda adopted by the Committee with the relevant document references is contained in annex I. The list of participants is contained in annex II.
3. During the session, ISCC was addressed by Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs and Secretary of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).
4. Mr. Pace noted that this was the last year that ISCC's work programme would be focused on task forces, and that the new focus on special interest groups (SIGs) would allow more flexibility with respect to changing priorities and focusing on important issues as they arise. He further noted that, following on Mr. Connor's and Mr. Civili's statements, it was imperative for ISCC to focus on achievable tasks and real accomplishments. Mr. Connor's statement is contained in annex III and Mr. Civili's statement in annex IV.
5. ISCC agreed to continue the work of its seventh session between 17 September and late October 1999 in order to complete the work requested by the Chairperson of defining achievable tasks and focusing the work of ISCC on real accomplishments within its mandate and the overall work programme, as defined in 1998. The results, approved via videoconference, are a substantive part of the present report and will be submitted to the meeting of the high-level Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the meetings of the Organizational Committee (OC). The high-priority projects approved by ISCC via videoconference are listed in annex V.

II. Matters for endorsement or approval by the Organizational Committee (OC)

6. ISCC recommends that Mr. Mauricio Milchberg, Director, Bureau of Documentation, Informatics and Telecommunications, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), be appointed as the next Chairperson of ISCC for a term of office of two years, starting in September 2000.
7. ISCC recommends that the eighth session of ISCC be held during the week of 16-20 October 2000 in Geneva, in close proximity to the International Computing Centre (ICC) Management Committee Meeting. ISCC plans to report semi-annually to OC, and will meet via videoconferencing to prepare resolutions for both the spring and autumn sessions of OC, as appropriate, starting in 2000. ISCC also will report to the high-level meeting of CCAQ in February 2000 and thereafter.
8. ISCC notes with appreciation the work of the **United Nations Consortium**, started under the Task Force on Inter-library Cooperation, Standards and Management (TF/LIB) of ISCC, which has generated real cost savings and substantial cost avoidance as well as a dramatic increase in the availability of information for Member States and United Nations system staff by coordinating the purchasing of commercial electronic information throughout the United Nations system and on behalf of permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations. ISCC also notes that real cost savings and improved telecommunications service have been generated by the use of the Airlines Worldwide Telecommunications and Information Services (SITA) umbrella contract, started by the Inter-Agency Telecommunications Advisory Committee (ITAC) group which is now becoming a part of ISCC.
9. The attention of OC is drawn to the fact that ISCC has been active and will continue to be active in fulfilling its first objective, as given by OC in 1993, namely, to assist in "making information more available". During the current biennium, the United Nations system Web site locator (<http://www.unsystem.org>), the "one-stop search" for United Nations system Web sites (<http://www3.itu.int/unions/>) and the depository libraries Web site (depolib.unsystem.org), *inter alia*, have made retrieving information from United Nations system organizations easier. One focus during the coming biennium will be **to provide schemes for additional types of information** that should be made available electronically

to Member States by substantially all agencies, and for information relevant to special groups (non-governmental organizations, missions and so forth).

10. The attention of OC is further drawn to the fact that, since 1994 as part of its regular work programme in pursuit of **the objective of assisting in “making information more available”**, ISCC has designed and piloted inter-organizational information systems, and that the operation of these pilot systems on an interim basis is being funded by ISCC. During the coming biennium, these pilot systems will be evaluated to establish whether they are fulfilling their purposes. If so, schemes for budgeting their continued operation will have to be put forward for the biennium 2002-2003, since ISCC is aware of the OC directive not to undertake operational obligations. The attention of OC is drawn to the fact that such schemes may involve the requirement for individual organizations to budget funds for continued operation of such systems on behalf of the joint system. On an interim basis, until such time as ISCC and individual organizations approve other financial and operational arrangements for these systems, the continued operation of the pilot inter-organizational systems will remain within the framework of ISCC. The amount forecast for these interim operations within the regular budget of ISCC for the biennium 2000-2001 is approximately \$97,000.

11. ISCC recommends that OC acknowledge the work planned within the biennium 2000-2001 to **support ACC and the ACC sub-organizations as they increase the use of information technology**. Responding to various requests, ISCC has helped to design and coordinate the Web sites for ACC bodies (<http://acc.unsystem.org>). During the biennium 2000-2001, projects such as the Executive Information Network and continuing development of Web sites and discussion tools on behalf of ACC are planned. These activities are budgeted for staff time and services with an amount of approximately \$70,000 for the biennium. ISCC recognizes that support to ACC, OC and related bodies is an important part of its mandate, although one not specifically mentioned in its terms of reference, and therefore would welcome an acknowledgment of this work by OC. In addition, ISCC has requested that the ISCC secretariat improve the transparency of reporting, ensuring that use of ISCC funds for these activities be identified clearly, and that the work be focused on facilitating the direct use of information technology by the various groups.

12. ISCC has noted and welcomes the increased interest in **coordination of information technology (IT) and the management of information** throughout the United

Nations system of organizations. Since the technical options and environment are changing at an ever-increasing pace, ISCC therefore believes that, within the framework of ISCC's terms of reference, it is important to **recommend strategies, concepts, architectures, recognized standards and guidelines to help harmonize solutions** across the different organizations in the United Nations system. Such tools will help individual agencies in their selection and implementation of individual products, while leaving the organizations free to choose individual software and hardware solutions. The attention of OC is drawn to the ISCC position that only rarely, if ever, will it be appropriate to specify single software or hardware solutions that would be binding across the whole United Nations system. ISCC noted that the active participation of other coordinating groups, such as CCAQ, was critical to the success of activities involving human resource recruitment and management, joint procurement, and integration of human resource and financial management.

13. ISCC noted that there is increased interest in information about **IT projects for development** throughout the United Nations system. ISCC noted that the International Network for Development Information Exchange (INDIX) is still operational, and reiterated its 1995 statement that all United Nations system organizations should be encouraged to provide data on their development activities directly to INDIX.

III. Summary of Committee accomplishments

14. The Chairman asked for final reports from the task force Chairpersons, stressing that the accomplishments and remaining items for action should be identified.

Common contact directory

15. On behalf of the Directory Services Task Force (TF/DIR), Mr. Stephen Geis (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) reminded the Committee that there were three types of obstacles, identified in 1998, that had to be removed before a common directory could be implemented across the United Nations system. These are: (a) technical: not all organizations have the agreed technology (lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP)) installed, although progress has been made, (b) procedural: organizations generally still have not established

procedures for ensuring that an authoritative body (for example, the Human Resources Division) is responsible for the content and (c) policy-related: not all organizations have agreed that contact information can be shared among the United Nations system organizations.

16. The Chairperson summarized the discussion by thanking TF/DIR and recommending that the Telecommunications SIG (SIG/NET) and the Strategy Resources and Management SIG (SIG/SRM) chairpersons, together with Mr. Geis and the ISCC Secretary develop an action-oriented recommendation for ACC, stressing the benefits, impacts and costs (including costs of non-implementation) of continuing to work towards a common contact directory scheme. The goal is to produce a complete design, and the required policy statements for approval by ACC.

United Nations system ExtraNet

17. On behalf of the Task Force on Expanded Internet-based Services (TF/NET), the Chairperson, Mr. Paul Gillingwater (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)), reminded the Committee of the ongoing ExtraNet project. A pilot of the ExtraNet is still expected before the end of 1999. However, he noted that the LDAP technology standard promulgated by the Task Force on Directory Services was also a prerequisite of the United Nations ExtraNet, and urged organizations to move forward with respect to the three aspects mentioned above. He also noted that each organization would need to commit to providing information, and would have to commit to keeping their node up to date (including funding).

18. The Chairperson summarized the discussion by thanking TF/NET and recommending that the SIG/NET chairperson, together with Mr. Gillingwater and the ISCC Secretary, develop an action-oriented recommendation for ACC, stressing the benefits, impacts and costs (including costs of non-implementation) of continuing to work towards a common contact directory scheme. It was also noted that the time-frame for the pilot may be optimistic, and urged SIG/NET to define concrete steps that would show specific accomplishments. IAEA was thanked for sponsoring, during fourth quarter 1999, the consultant to finalize the ExtraNet pilot.

United Nations system on-line search mechanism and the Participating Agencies Mobility System

19. The ISCC Secretary summarized other continuing work in the TF/NET work plan that would be passed to SIG/NET, namely (a) the issue of defining continuing support and technology for the United Nations Search Engine (UNIONS) and (b) the pilot and eventual production status of the Participating Agencies Mobility System (PAMS) which had been developed by TF/NET for the CCAQ (Financial and Budgetary Questions (FB)). Regarding UNIONS, the Committee noted that, since more commercial products were now available, it would investigate whether a commercial product could replace UNIONS without requiring all organizations to adopt a common search engine for their Web sites. The Committee urged TF/NET to take a close look at UNIONS in the last quarter of 1999.

Metadata standards

20. Reporting on behalf of the Chairperson of the Task Force on Document Management Technology (TF/DOM), Ms. Denise Pelissier (UNESCO), the ISCC Secretary took note of her report on the work towards completion of standards for a core set of metadata to describe documents in electronic document management systems and to describe Web-based information.

21. The ISCC Chairperson summarized the discussion by noting that there was still work remaining, namely, the detailed specification of how the various metadata elements should be filled, and urged all organizations that had not yet responded to the request for information on their use of metadata to send their response quickly to the ISCC Secretary and the TF/DOM and TF/LIB Chairpersons.

22. The ISCC Chairperson also noted that the discussion indicated that the approval in 1998 by ACC of the metadata elements was not sufficient. There must be a complete package that would be distributed to organizations, indicating the required actions.

Inter-organizational systems for improving access to information

23. The report of TF/LIB was given by the Chairperson, Ms. Eleanor Frierson (International Labour Organization (ILO)). This Task Force was created at the beginning of the operation of ISCC and, following various Economic and Social Council resolutions, has concentrated on developing standards and pilot systems for improving access to

information. A complete report of the meeting in April of TF/LIB is available on the ISCC Web site.

24. Ms. Frierson reported that the group had been responsible for three main achievements which ISCC needed to consider: the Depository Libraries Location (DEPOLIB) system which allowed the public to find the location of all United Nations system depository libraries in the world; the shared library cataloguing system (the United Nations Libraries Cataloguing and Public Access System (UNCAPS)), and the United Nations Consortium for the purchasing of electronic information licences. Although UNCAPS is still just starting the pilot phase, all three activities have already made unprecedented amounts of information available to the public, to staff of permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations and to staff throughout the United Nations system.

Depository Libraries Location (DEPOLIB) system

25. The Committee noted that the DEPOLIB system was valuable, but still had only six organizations participating. All United Nations system organizations with depository libraries should include the location and contact information for these libraries in the DEPOLIB system. It was noted that the DEPOLIB system could be expanded to include the location and contact information of United Nations system libraries, documentation centres and reference centres at Headquarters and in the field. The system continues to be hosted by ICC and funded by ISCC, but updating is the responsibility of the participating organizations. A presentation of DEPOLIB was made at the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documents and Publications in July 1999.

United Nations Libraries Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System (UNCAPS)

26. The Committee noted that work on UNCAPS continued, with the public pilot of the system still to start in 1999. A complete report of the developments during 1999 is available from the UNCAPS Quality Control Committee, led by Ms. Lorraine Waitman of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. The system now includes the catalogues from 15 United Nations system organizations, but more could be included. This system provides significant benefit to small libraries and field libraries, by

decreasing their start-up time. It also provides the backbone for connecting the public to sources of information from United Nations system organizations through a single on-line catalogue.

United Nations System Standard Indexing Vocabulary (UNIVOC)

27. The Committee noted that work on the United Nations System Standard Indexing Vocabulary (UNIVOC) continues, with the final specification of the vocabulary still to be carried out following feedback and comparison with existing vocabularies in use throughout the system. When completed, this vocabulary should become standard throughout the United Nations system organizations, thereby improving the ability to retrieve information on similar topics from different organizations.

Coordinated purchasing of commercial electronic information (United Nations Consortium)

28. The Committee took note of the report given by the United Nations Consortium coordinator, Ms. Mary Cherif (United Nations), of the results of the Consortium's operation since its establishment in January 1998. The Consortium has generated significant cost savings and cost avoidance for permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations and United Nations system organizations, while making significant quantities of commercial information, much of which was previously unaffordable, available electronically on the desktops of mission and United Nations system staff. The Committee commended the Consortium as providing a real example of working together. The Consortium had met earlier in the same week to discuss cost sharing and to hear proposals from further vendors. The Consortium needs to make its work better known, and is looking forward to the United Nations system ExtraNet as a vehicle for simplifying the access authorizations. Until the ExtraNet begins operation, the Consortium members are urged to work within their organizations to make information available via their organizational Intranets.

Inter-agency cooperation

29. **Telecommunications coordination:** the ISCC Secretary reported on behalf of the ITAC group, which would become a formal part of ISCC as of January 2000. The group met in June at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and shared information on telecommunications initiatives at the various organizations. Among the initiatives that will be continued by the Special Interest Group on Telecommunications (SIG-TAG) are: negotiations for better service from SITA; sharing of private automatic branch exchange (PABX) specifications for more common PABX exchange; establishment of a common dialling system; and investigation of principles for least-cost routing for telephony and best practices in emerging satellite telecommunication services.

30. **Y2K (year 2000 problem):** the ISCC Secretary gave a brief overview of the status of information systems, as reported by members. The Committee noted that information systems developed by non-IT professionals in the field still remained a concern for several organizations. It was agreed that there was no point to further updating of the status report, with less than 120 days until the end of the year. The Committee heard a report by Mr. Bertrand Juppion de Fondaumière on the special Y2K in the United Nations Secretariat. The Committee noted with interest the information about the contingency planning now under way, and that the network of Y2K focal points, in which ISCC participated, had been useful in sharing best practices.

31. **Technical briefings:** the Committee welcomed the briefings by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on their business intelligence system, and by the United Nations on their central management software (CMS) desktop management system. The complete presentations are available on the ISCC Intranet. Mr. Lee White, the Chairperson of the INDIX Steering Committee, reported on the work that INDIX continues to perform. He urged the ISCC representatives to carry the message to their organizations to continue (or restart) submitting information about technical cooperation projects to INDIX, as had been encouraged by ISCC in 1995. The Committee also heard a briefing by Intelsat on their upcoming advances in satellite communications.

32. **Committee liaison:** the ISCC Secretary noted the close cooperation that had emerged in 1999 between ISCC and the CCAQ secretariats, owing to the "co-location" in the Palais. He also noted that contacts with the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) had been made and that the work being done for the JIAMCATT group (Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Aided Translation and Terminology) continued, and regular

contact with the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) was maintained, and that initial contact with the New York Common Systems Initiative had been made. He also thanked the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs in New York for providing assistance. Mr. Matthew Finn briefed the Committee on the various Web sites and mailing lists maintained by ISCC on behalf of associated ACC groups. The Committee commented that it was important to be able to determine which groups were active in which areas.

33. **Digital libraries briefing:** the Committee was briefed by two leading industry experts, Dr. Marc Krellenstein of Northern Light, and Dr. Terry Noreault from Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), on the trends and challenges in digital libraries. The experts explained some of the challenges facing the United Nations system, answered questions and agreed to work further with the United Nations system. Among other items, they noted that the "single search/single view" being provided by ISCC's UNION search mechanism was the correct approach, but that the decentralized technology might not be able to cope with the volume or complexity of the information. Standards for indexing the data, such as the metadata scheme being developed by ISCC, were essential. Further challenges include multilinguality and reaching the "information have-nots", as well as providing the link to the full text of the documents, not just to the bibliographic reference. The complete briefing is available as a Web cast via the ISCC public Web site. The Committee applauded the quality of the briefing and the effort that the participants had made to travel at their own expense during hurricane Floyd. The Committee regretted the absence of Mr. Clifford Lynch from the Coalition for Networked Information, and sent its condolences for his personal loss.

Follow-up on ISCC recommendations

34. **The ".INT" Recommendation:** Mr. Stephen Geis reported on the status of ".INT" domain registration, following ISCC's recommendation in 1997 for all United Nations system organizations to adopt this high-level domain for their Internet work. He noted that the responsibility for .INT registration had been in flux for the previous two years, but was now soon expected to be vested in ITU, and distributed a draft statement of policy and procedure that had been proposed by ITU, and that made reference to the list of organizations maintained by ISCC on the United Nations system Web site locator as the

definitive list for United Nations system organizations. The Chairperson summarized and recommended that organizations be reminded of the recommendation from 1995.

35. **The United Nations Consortium:** the Committee noted that, according to the report of the Consortium, almost all United Nations system organizations had joined the Consortium, as recommended by ISCC in 1998.

IV. Items for action for 2000

36. The discussions of work in 2000 were organized around the approved elements of the ISCC work programme for the next biennium, namely, the Special Interest Group for Expanded Use of the Internet (SIG/NET), for Library and Information Systems (SIG/LIS), for Document and Archive Management (SIG/DAS), for Telecommunications (SIG/TAG) and for Strategies and Resource Management (SIG/SRM). The discussion also included the consideration of the draft report on the role and functioning of ISCC.

Special interest groups

37. The Chairperson initiated the discussion by pointing out the responsibilities of the SIG Chairpersons, both to plan achievable tasks and to initiate them using staff in the participating organizations and to follow up on a regular basis. It was recommended that a means should be created for SIG Chairpersons to report monthly to the ISCC focal points on the tasks under way. This process will provide more structure and hopefully ensure that tasks are not sidelined.

38. The Chairperson further noted that work defining the initial tasks for 2000 was still under way, especially considering the priorities given by Mr. Connor and Mr. Civili in addressing the Committee. Noting that these task definitions needed to be completed rapidly and approved by the Committee, it was agreed that the SIG Chairpersons would meet via videoconference to define tasks, including taking over appropriate tasks from the previous task forces. These recommendations will then be forwarded to a videoconference meeting of the full Committee in November.

39. In defining tasks, the Chairperson noted that the member States were ISCC's owners and users, while the Working Group on Informatics could be considered a user group. While ISCC reports to ACC, it also needs to keep

the owners and users informed and ensure that it is creating value for them. ISCC needs to be realistic in terms of the degree of commitment that the participants can provide: this means setting a limited number of high-priority objectives. ISCC should establish strategies for facilitating the more effective use of information and information technology. The majority of ISCC work is done through the participating organizations, and each organization must commit resources if it commits to being an active participant in a SIG.

40. The SIG Chairpersons each presented an overview of their proposed initial priorities. It was agreed that these priorities and their associated tasks would be further defined in light of the new information and reported after the November meeting.

Role and functioning of ISCC

41. The discussion of the role and functioning of ISCC had been started in 1998 at the request of ISCC at its sixth session, in order for options to be recommended for the continued operation of information systems designed and piloted by ISCC. It was further influenced by the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The Chairperson initiated the discussion by pointing out that ISCC needed to identify all channels to which it reported and through which it obtained information and which it informed.

42. After discussion, ISCC agreed that systems prototyped by ISCC should, in general, be turned over to lead agencies for continued operation. Other options, such as increasing ISCC's regular budget or creating a new inter-organizational entity to be responsible for such operations, were not seen as feasible. The Committee noted that decisions regarding which systems to turn over, and to which agencies and when to remove them from ISCC's responsibility should be taken on a case-by-case basis, taking due regard of aspects such as ownership and quality control. The Committee noted further that, as default, technical operation of such systems should be vested with ICC and that, while some "operational" aspects might remain within the ISCC secretariat, such as Web work as a result of special arrangements with CCAQ, such work should not rely on funding from the ISCC regular budget. Also, the Committee noted that the ISCC terms of reference should include reference to all types of work requested by ACC, and agreed to recommend a clarification to ACC. It was agreed that further detailed discussion would take place before November, with a view

to finalizing recommendations to ACC and reporting together with the detailed work plans.

V. Other business

43. The Secretary of ISCC briefed the Committee on the status of the budget approval process for the budget and work programme for 2000-2001, including reference to the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/54/7) and the statements of support from Mr. Connor and Mr. Civili. The Chairperson summarized the discussion by noting that the Secretary and he would be active during the next few months in briefing the relevant bodies, and thanked the United Nations representative for his statement of support.

44. The Committee also heard a brief update on the current financial situation and noted that a report was available on-line from ICC on work done during 1999 at the request of ISCC.

45. The Committee recommended by consensus that Mr. Mauricio Milchberg, Director, Bureau of Documentation, Informatics and Telecommunications, UNESCO, be appointed as the next Chairperson of ISCC for a term of office of two years, starting in September 2000.

46. The eighth session was planned for the week of 16-20 October 2000, in close proximity to the ICC Management Committee meeting, in Geneva. ISCC plans to report semi-annually to OC, and will meet via videoconferencing to prepare resolutions for both the spring and autumn sessions of OC as appropriate, starting in 2000. ISCC also will report to the high-level meeting of CCAQ in February 2000 and thereafter. The Committee noted that, although planning was impossible for natural occurrences such as hurricane Floyd, the agenda should be arranged to include substantive decision items earlier in the meeting. The agenda will include, *inter alia*, the proposed work programme and budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

47. The Committee agreed that the Chairpersons of the special interest groups would meet via videoconference during the week of 11-16 October 1999 to further specify the priorities and specific work items for the year 2000, and to review the recommendations by the task forces. Their results will be reported to a meeting of the full Committee via videoconference during November 1999 for approval and reporting to the high-level meeting of CCAQ and the meeting of OC in the first quarter of 2000.

48. The Committee expressed its gratitude to all task force Chairpersons, especially Ms. Eleanor Frierson, who had led TF/LIB since its inception in 1994.

49. The report of this session was reviewed via electronic mail and amended.

Annex I

Agenda of the seventh session of ISCC

Administrative items

Normal administrative matters: 09.30-10.15 a.m.:

- (a) Approval of agenda: Chairman;
- (b) Welcoming address by Mr. Joseph Connor (Under-Secretary-General for Management);
- (c) Meeting logistics: ISCC Secretary and Mr. G. P. Roz.
1. 1998 accomplishments and status of tasks: reports by the task forces.
2. Report on Y2K coordination:
 - (a) Update of IS statistics from focal points: ISCC Secretary;
 - (b) Update on other activities in the United Nations system: Mr. Bertrand Juppín de Fondaumière (United Nations).
3. Technology trends (public session):
 - (a) Presentation by UN/ITSD on managing desktop software (“CMS”);
 - (b) Presentation by UNDP on BRIO Business Intelligence;
 - (c) Presentation by INTELSAT on satellite communication trends, including bundled “bandwidth on demand”.
4. Trends in information services:
 - (a) Presentations/discussions on trends in developing and providing access to digital libraries: preparation of and access to digital information.
5. Information services from the ISCC secretariat:

Web site management, its costs and its outputs.
6. Coordination with other United Nations committees.
7. Tasks for 2000: reports by SIGs.
8. Information-sharing on technical standards.
9. Operational and service aspects of ISCC, including address by Mr. Patrizio Civili (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Secretary of ACC, Chairman of OC).
10. ISCC finances.
11. Final meeting administration.
12. Approval of the report of the Committee on its seventh session.

Annex II

Attendees of the seventh session of ISCC

Chairperson (FAO)	Mr. Giuseppe Pace ^{*,**}
FAO	Ms. Margaret Zito
IAEA	Ms. Denise Löhner ^{*,**} Mr. Paul Gillingwater ^{**}
IBRD	Mr. William Buck Ms. Anaflavia Fonseca ^{**}
ICAO	Mr. Albert Pelsser [*]
IFAD	Mr. Massimo Aureli [*] Ms. Carla Secchi
ILO	Mr. Nadim Habra ^{*,**} Ms. Eleanor Frierson ^{**} Mr. Remo Becci Ms. Laurel Dryden
IMF	Mr. Frank Marento [*]
ITC	Ms. Nadia Hebboul
ITU	Mr. Wolfgang Wohlleber ^{*,**} Mr. Stephen Geis ^{**}
United Nations	Mr. Gian Piero Roz ^{*,**} Ms. Phyllis Dickstein Ms. Mary Cherif Ms. Lorraine Waitman
UNAIDS	Dr. Pradeep Kumar [*]
UNCC	Mr. Anthony Salmon ^{*,**}
UNCTAD	Mr. Paul Robertson [*] Ms. Aurelie Von Wartensleben
UNDCP	Mr. Anders Norsker ^{*,**}
UNDP	Mr. Fikret Akura [*] Mr. Lawrence Yeung
UNESCO	Mr. Mauricio Milchberg ^{*,**} Ms. Liane Barsony Ms. Denise Pelissier ^{**} only
ESCWA	Ms. Sawson Baage
UNFPA	Mr. Rafiodin Malikzay ^{*,**}
UNICEF	Mr. André Spatz [*]
UNIDO	Mr. Paul Makin ^{*,**} only

^{*} ISCC focal point.

^{**} Attendance at 21 October 1999 video conference.

UNHCR	Mr. Magdi Elias **
UNOG	Ms. Marguerite Burnett *
UNON	Mr. Mehmet Icagasi *
UNOV	Mr. Jozsef Puster **
UNOPS	Mr. Norman Sanders *
WFP	Mr. György Konda **
WHO	Mr. Neel Mani * Ms. Yvonne Grandbois
WIPO	Mr. Inayet Syed *
WMO	Mr. Jairo Granados-Fernandez *
WTO	Mr. Ghassan Karam *,**
ISCC	Mr. Jerry Barton ** Mr. Matthew Finn ** Ms. Patricia Geddes

Observers

ICC	Mr. Edward Gelbstein Mr. Andreas Christoforides
UNJSPF	Mr. Paul Dooley
CCAQ	Ms. Mary Jane Peters ** only

Agencies not in attendance

IMO, UNRWA, UNU, UPU

* ISCC focal point.

** Attendance at 21 October 1999 video conference.

Annex III

Welcoming statement by Mr. Joseph Connor, Under-Secretary-General for Management of the United Nations

It is my pleasure to welcome you today on behalf of the United Nations.

As some of you may be aware, within the framework of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) high-level, the United Nations has been raising the issue of greater cooperation in the area of information technology (IT). The Secretary-General, as part of his programme of reform, has given great emphasis to the creation of common services and common initiatives. The holding of your meeting at this time at the United Nations premises may be a good opportunity to look more concretely at the possibilities that we have for greater cooperation in the area of IT.

IT is a buzzword, indeed. But few people still realize that without IT the work of our organizations may come to a standstill. The functioning of a local area network (LAN) connecting hundreds of personal computers (PCs) and other devices is taken for granted but still too many people ignore the complexities of keeping up a wide and complex LAN. In the same manner, the impact of other IT activities, essential to our operations, are underestimated.

It is my view, and that of many of my colleagues here, that IT, more than other areas, presents us with excellent opportunities for greater cooperation, standardization, common approaches. Regrettably, both within our organizations, starting from the United Nations itself, and between organizations, very little has been done. On the contrary, the one initiative that was most successful and that benefited many organizations, the International Computing Centre, is facing difficulties owing to the lack of willingness and capability on the part of all of us to capitalize on such a structure. In the area of IT still, as in many other areas, each organization pretends to be unique, while in fact the requirements are the same or very close. The debate as to how to operate systems developed under the auspices of ISCC is indicative of this situation. Everybody recognizes the need and usefulness of such systems but we cannot find solutions to make use of them.

The doubts expressed by some Member States about the relevance of ISCC are a reflection of the fact that in spite of meetings, agreements, ambitious plans, we collectively cannot find ways for real cooperation.

I know that you will be discussing your future programme of work. I would like to stress that the position

of the United Nations is that we should define objectives that can realistically be achieved so that concrete results can be shown to Member States. It is your credibility that is under question because cooperation will be achieved only if you yourselves act accordingly and want to achieve concrete results.

The United Nations is committed to cooperation, common initiatives and common strategies. I am aware that often the United Nations is seen by the specialized agencies as a Too-Big Brother owing to its size. I think that we have demonstrated over the past few years that this is not the case and that we are extremely open to joint initiatives. I am therefore appealing to you to collectively, honestly and constructively work to make ISCC what it is expected to be, the think-tank of the United Nations in the IT area. If concrete feasible initiatives do not arise from your Committee, the credibility itself of the Committee and its Members will be questioned even more.

Let me therefore wish you a constructive and concrete session. I am looking forward to a series of proposals that the United Nations will be able to support.

Let me conclude by stating that we will do our utmost to ensure that the General Assembly approves the necessary funding for the next biennium. But you were given a strong warning: either you deliver more or ISCC may disappear.

Thank you.

Annex IV

Statement by Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, United Nations, and Secretary, Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)

Let me start by thanking you and Mr. Barton for the initiative you took of arranging for me to meet with you today — and apologies if my coming here now interrupts the flow of your work, particularly towards the end of the session.

I know that Joe Connor spoke to you at the opening of the session and presented to you, in a very frank manner, the United Nations Organization's own perspective on the main issues facing the system in the field of information technology (IT), and on the challenges facing the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), and therefore your Committee, in this area. I am here to introduce a somewhat different perspective — the inter-agency coordination angle, as seen from the vantage point of ACC and its Organizational Committee (OC), and, in some ways, that of Economic and Social Council (I draw, in this respect, on my dual responsibilities vis-à-vis both the inter-secretariat and the intergovernmental coordination machinery, but, of course, what I will put to you are my own personal views). Although I will be putting to you issues from a somewhat different perspective from that of Mr. Connor, as you will see, the conclusions I end up drawing will turn out to be very similar to those he put to you.

First, let me talk about how I see ISCC situated in the coordination machinery, both in terms of the issues you deal with, and in terms of the position of the Committee itself in the network of bodies that make up the ACC machinery.

The issues first. There is a bit of a paradox here that I find it difficult to illustrate, but let me try. There has been in the past few years a major qualitative change in the way Executive Heads in ACC approach policy coordination within the system. All agencies, large or small, now realize that no one has all the answers, and that, even in their own specific field of competence, they cannot realize their objectives without the support and contribution of others. At the policy level, United Nations agencies increasingly see themselves no longer as separate institutions that happen to have agreements with the United Nations and other agencies. They remain of course conscious of their autonomy and distinctiveness, but, increasingly, they see themselves as an integral part of a system sharing common

objectives and a common view of how to reach these objectives.

A central part of this common view is a definition of the comparative advantage of the United Nations system, and of the main asset that it has to offer which revolves around the unique wealth of information that the system as a whole possesses, and the sense that it must find new and better ways of sharing and of placing it in a more effective and integrated way at the disposal of the membership. This, in turn, translates into a view of IT as holding the key that would enable the system to maximize its comparative advantage and, consequently, its impact on peace-building and development.

Governments, in turn, increasingly look at the capacity of developing countries to muster IT as a key condition for the success of the development effort. For example, the Economic and Social Council has chosen IT and its implications for development — not trade, not finance, but information technology — as the theme for its next high-level segment in the year 2000.

This qualitatively new atmosphere in the system's approach to policy coordination, and the new consensus that is emerging on the central place of information-sharing and of IT in the work of the system, should have logically resulted in giving the promotion of coordination in information systems — the mandate of this Committee — one of the highest priorities in the overall coordination effort. And this is obviously not yet the case. I am sure you understand that this is not in any way intended to be a criticism of the work of the Committee as such. This Committee had definite accomplishments to its credit. The progress it has been making clearly represents a marked improvement over what predecessor inter-agency committees in this area have been able to accomplish.

What I am trying to convey is a sense — right or wrong — that, if viewed, not in relation to the history of information system coordination work (which clearly makes the Committee shine), but in relation to the current state of overall coordination within the system, IT coordination risks lagging behind, while, for the reasons I have outlined, there would be all sorts of good reasons to expect, or see to it, that it should be at the forefront of the coordination effort.

And this observation is not unrelated to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) problem that Mr. Connor has addressed. Misunderstandings and misperceptions have clearly come into play. And I have received, as you have, strong assurances that the United Nations will spare no effort to clarify them and make things right in the General Assembly. But the ACABQ problem should not be entirely dismissed. It is an alarm bell reflecting a sense, perhaps wrongly articulated but not unfounded, that we are not, in relation to IT coordination, where the logic of what we ourselves are saying on the system's policies and priorities would suggest we should be.

I will revert to some of these points in a moment. But let me turn now to the issue of the place of ISCC within the ACC subsidiary machinery. Arrangements for coordination in your area under ACC have gone through many permutations — more permutations, I believe, than those of any other inter-agency body I can think of (and I go back a long time, all the way to the Computer Users' Committee (CUC)). Names, terms of reference and reporting arrangements have changed quite a few times, but myself I am increasingly coming to the conclusion that what counts in the ACC machinery is not names or nuances in the language of the terms of reference, but rather a clear sense of priorities in the elaboration of the actual work programme, a result orientation — to use current jargon — in its implementation and, most important, the way in which members of any given committee perceive the message from the top — and by top I mean Executive Heads and Member States — on how far they are expected to go.

If seen from this vantage point, the current place of ISCC within the ACC machinery is, I believe, quite clear. It is not something that can be easily reflected in an organigram, but I have no doubt that coordination in the IT area has now acquired at least the same importance as coordination in the personnel and financial areas — the areas covered by the two established branches of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) — with the important difference of course — in terms of the challenges you face — that, in the CCAQ area, there is already a common system at the base, while in many ways you have to create yours as you go along. But you must at the same time be aware that you have on your side a clear view at the top (as I have defined it before) that improved ways of information-sharing and information dissemination through IT is key to the future of United Nations organizations and the system as a whole. This, in turn, translates, in my view, into two sets of priorities: one

having to do with the development of common informatics strategies for the system as a whole, and the other involving the provision of leadership and support in the IT area for the work of ACC itself and the overall ACC machinery, with, of course, the creation of “policies and standards to ensure wider accessibility of the United Nations system's information” — to use wording from your terms of reference — providing the ultimate objective of the effort.

The priority to be given to the development of common strategies is a direction that comes to this Committee, before and more authoritatively than from me, from the high-level CCAQ, which, after all, represents the highest level of management policy in the system, and I hope very much that this Committee will respond to the CCAQ request with the sense of urgency it deserves. More generally, I think it is important that, in relation to all of this work, this Committee should regard itself as an integral part of what I would call the CCAQ family — with responsibility, under the direction of the high-level CCAQ, for an increasingly crucial part of common system policy.

The other priority I am advocating — which I define as this Committee's regarding itself as the IT “soul” (if I can put it this way) of ACC and of ACC substantive committees in the exercise of their policy and programme coordination responsibilities — is what justifies a continuation of the original reporting link to OC, as the organizational hub of the ACC substantive machinery. There is no conflict whatsoever between these two reporting lines. In fact, if well managed, they can only be a source of additional strength for this Committee.

This second dimension of the role of this Committee is, in many ways, already a reality in the way your Secretary is cooperating very closely with the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs in building up responses to the growing information system requirements of ACC and the overall ACC machinery. I have in mind in particular the truly invaluable support that your secretariat has extended to us in constructing the new ACC Web site, linking the many sites being developed in different parts of the ACC machinery. And I trust that the same degree of support from the secretariat and from the Committee itself will be forthcoming in development of the Executive Information Network which the Executive Heads have asked us to build up as a matter of priority, and as an important part of the effort to make ACC more than just periodic meetings of Executive Heads, but a day-to-day reality in the communication practices and policy development processes of the senior management of our organizations — and,

indeed, an important part of the new image that ACC wishes to convey to itself.

What this second priority, I propose, demands of this Committee is not an overhaul in its work programme, but in the first instance a new attitude in the way the Committee perceives itself, not simply or not only as a specialized body with its own set of specific technical tasks to carry forward, but as an integral part of a network that tries to advance certain common substantive policy objectives and that increasingly looks to information technology as the new avenue to maximize effectiveness and impact.

Let me stress again that the implication of what I am advocating here is not necessarily any major shift in your work programme, but perhaps a new sensitivity to the policy concerns and substantive objectives as they evolve within the ACC machinery, and a sense on the part of this Committee that advancing and supporting the IT dimensions of these policy objectives are an integral and important part of its responsibilities.

One final point on this. Mr. Connor has emphasized the importance of concrete, tangible outcomes resulting from the work of this Committee. I can only echo him in this respect but I would add that, among these concrete results, one should count and value highly the contribution that this Committee will be able to make to enabling the ACC machinery as a whole to take maximum advantage of information technology in advancing the substantive objectives that the United Nations system is here to serve.

And you can certainly count on me and my colleagues in the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs in highlighting the contribution and accomplishments of this Committee and in extending whatever support we can to your work.

Annex V

High-priority projects and recommendations for 2000-2001

A. Introduction

1. The Committee noted that the approved work programme for 2000-2001 was ambitious and that priorities needed to be set. In this regard, the Committee welcomed the priority guidance and the directions given by Mr. Connor and Mr. Civili in their addresses to the Committee. Noting that the time during the meeting was not sufficient to allow high-priority projects to be defined well, the Committee agreed to hold additional sessions during October 1999 via videoconference. The present annex includes the results from these discussions, and is an integral part of document ACC/1999/19, as approved via videoconference on 21 October 1999.

2. The resulting projects and ISCC priorities are in line with the approved ISCC work programme and budget for 2000-2001 (ACC/1998/ISCC/10.3).

3. The Committee reconfirmed the overall focus for 2000-2001 as given in ACC/1998/ISCC/10.3, namely, that “while maintaining the momentum to improve the use of technology to produce and manage information, the overarching strategy for 2000-2001 will be to continue enhancing the use of information management and technology to improve access to United Nations system information by ALL offices (including those at the regional and field level) and by Member States within missions and at the national capitals, to facilitate the dissemination of information using contemporary means. The ISCC will take the lead in harmonizing information management strategies and the use of information technology, and harmonize its initiatives with common services and other inter-agency initiatives”. The Committee also reconfirmed that its role as adviser to ACC in matters of information management involved both the design and recommendation of mechanisms (systems) for harmonization of improved use of information and the harmonization of the underlying technology infrastructure for information.

4. The Committee noted that the biennium 2000-2001 would see the fruition of developments started during previous bienniums, particularly in the area of simplifying access to information across the entire United Nations system.

B. ISCC work plan

5. ISCC noted that the approved work plan for 2000-2001 had activities in both of the areas included in the focus, namely in progressively harmonizing IT activities with the United Nations system and in facilitating the dissemination of information.

6. ISCC has evaluated its work programme, which relies heavily on time and commitment by staff in the participating organizations. Within this work programme, five lead agencies have been designated: the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for work in the area of strategies, resources and management (SIG/SRM), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for library systems and information services (SIG/LIS), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for telecommunications (SIG-TAG), the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) for document and archive systems (SIG/DAS) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for Internet technologies (SIG-NET). The lead agencies were requested to develop a limited number of high-priority projects within the scope of the work plan (ACC/1998/ISCC/10.3). These projects, as approved by ISCC, will be the first projects undertaken in 2000, with other areas of the work plan following. The objectives for each area, listed in detail in document ACC/1998/ISCC/10.3, remain essentially valid.

7. The Committee noted that many of the projects required partnerships with and active participation of other United Nations and related bodies, such as the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) (CCAQ(PER)) and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)), the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), IAMLADP (Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documents and Publications), JIAMCATT (Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Aided Translation and Terminology), joint procurement mechanisms such as the Common Services Initiative from United Nations Headquarters and so on. ISCC welcomes this development, since it increases the potential for harmonization across the United Nations system, and will be approaching these bodies through their secretariats and through the appropriate focal points for participation in

projects as appropriate. The Committee also noted that the continued partnership with the International Computing Centre (ICC) as the default service provider continues to be valuable.

8. The Committee noted that the budget allocations to the five focus areas were outlined in the work-plan document, but that shifts of funds from one area to another could be agreed among the lead agencies of the affected focus areas. Each lead agency, with the assistance of the ISCC secretariat, is charged with ensuring that the use of funds is well planned and within the available limits.

Discussion forums

9. ISCC has implemented an electronic discussion tool as part of its restricted-access Intranet, and intends to make use of this tool to increase the discussions among participating agencies on a wide range of subjects within the work plan. These discussions can lead to specific projects and/or to common understandings of technical options and directions. Initially, discussions are planned in each of the five focus areas above, but are not limited to those areas since any participant can start a new discussion. Some of the initial subjects for discussion include: activities required to develop and harmonize IT strategies, needs for common policies on privacy of e-mails and personal data, identification of common elements of management information systems and executive information systems, knowledge management, electronic document management, electronic commerce, digital libraries, including aspects of full-text retrieval, telecommunications, and information management, including aspects of multilingualism.

C. High-priority projects harmonizing IT activities

Standardization of human resource profiles for IT posts

10. The Committee noted that organizations' ability to find, recruit and retain highest-qualified IT staff was being ever-increasingly undermined, owing to (a) the United Nations Common System salaries' not being competitive for the IT occupational group and (b) the present "tier II" IT posts classification scheme's not corresponding to today's IT world, resulting in perceived inconsistency in the application of the job classification standards across organizations. The Committee noted that inconsistency of the grading standards led to competition among

organizations owing to comparable jobs' being graded differently. Such inconsistency may be due to the lack of up-to-date tier II standards to serve as guidance in the application of the Master Standards of the Common System. Therefore, under the general leadership of the strategies, resources and management group, SIG/SRM (led by ITU), a task force, together with a consultant and associated groups such as CCAQ(PER), will seek urgent solutions to the above problems.

11. The task force will propose a set of concrete, standardized profiles for IT posts, related to the United Nations classifications scheme, to aid in the updating of the Common System Tier II standards. This set of profiles will be available for use as a sound basis for recruiting and retaining staff.

12. With respect to salaries, the Committee noted that no organizations to date had implemented the non-pensionable "special occupational rates" scheme approved by ICSC and the General Assembly. Furthermore, the task force will work together with CCAQ(PER) to document illustrative special occupational rates for IT professionals already in use in other international organizations.

Coordinated procurement of major software

13. The Committee noted that most organizations in the United Nations system did not always procure their hardware and software systems in coordination with other organizations, and did not always use the benefits of frame agreements with the vendors that could reduce expenses. The Committee noted further that the Inter-Agency Telecommunications Committee (ITAC) had successfully taken such an approach for certain telecommunication services, and that ISCC had demonstrated the viability of coordinated procurement through the United Nations Consortium. These agreements allow all agencies to benefit from the combined buying power of the United Nations system and in some cases give cumulative discounts based on total purchases under the overall agreement. The Committee decided that, under the general leadership of the strategies, resources and management group, SIG/SRM (led by ITU), a task force, together with associated groups such as CCAQ(FB) and existing joint procurement efforts, would identify product areas of interest where frame agreements could be of benefit to a substantial number of organizations. The first priority will be software, particularly packages for which a large number of organizations make major expenditures.

14. The task force will identify specific products and vendors and a framework for contractual arrangements and

pricing conditions on a United Nations system-wide basis. Negotiations would be carried out by appropriate lead agencies or a joint procurement group.

Harmonized IT support for human resources management and financial management

15. The Committee noted that there were a number of opportunities for improvements in the selection and implementation of commercial software in the human resources and financial management areas (enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs)). For example, standardized definitions of data elements will facilitate exchanging information in these areas among United Nations system organizations and with CCAQ. The Committee also noted the need for close coupling of human resources systems and financial management systems. These needs can be addressed by formulating a common approach to correlating or coupling the three phases of budget management with the corresponding aspects of personnel management, specifically in the key areas where personnel actions have financial implications, and their budget counterparts, namely, position management and budget planning; personnel administration (contracts management) and budget control; and salary payments (payroll), budget execution and accounting.

16. The Committee decided that, under the general leadership of the strategies, resources and management group SIG/SRM (led by ITU), a task force, together with a consultant and associated groups such as CCAQ(PER) and CCAQ(FB), would develop a data dictionary of common data elements and process definitions for personnel management and financial management and possibly procurements areas, starting with the elements defined by CCAQ and the elements defined in the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS); and would develop guidelines for an integrated architecture of finance and personnel systems. The guidelines will illustrate how the personnel actions and budget management process interact. Such guidelines would become a requirement specification for software package selection as well as a software package implementation guideline.

Repository for major software applications

17. The Committee noted that the repository of software applications developed in 1995 and 1996 (UNAPPS), in response to the ISCC terms of reference, was no longer useful in its present form, and requires undue maintenance. The Committee therefore has decided that the repository should be simplified to hold information about commercial

software applications in use in United Nations system organizations, instead of the much longer list of in-house developed applications. The maintenance of this information will be carried out by the organizations, as before, and the data will be available to the organizations, forming a basis for harmonization among the organizations. The ISCC secretariat was tasked with arranging for a consultant to implement the simplification.

18. As a special instance of the above repository, the ISCC secretariat will assist in creating a Web site clearing house of **electronic commerce activities** of United Nations system organizations. The initiative for such a repository is with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and ITU. ISCC is assisting in the design work, and will facilitate the availability of the repository for all United Nations system organizations.

Internet security standards

19. The Committee noted that organizations were faced with a rapidly growing number of security challenges in their use of Internet technologies, and were presented with a wide range of options for making use of secure transmission of information via the Internet. A task force, under the general leadership of the Internet Technology group, SIG-NET (led by ILO), with the help of consultants, will define standard procedures and guidelines to secure the Internet-based services of the organizations of the United Nations system. Some specific activities include: to research and recommend firewalls that maximize both security and flexibility, to ensure the integrity of the public Web sites, and to research and recommend standards for electronic mail encryption and digital signatures.

20. The task force will propose a set of concrete, standardized technical recommendations and policy recommendations. These recommendations will be forwarded to the high-level CCAQ for approval and then implementation in individual organizations.

D. High-priority projects improving access to information

The United Nations system ExtraNet

21. The Committee noted that a general situation existed where individual organizations could not share information easily with each other, since most information was either “public” for everyone or “internal” to a specific organization, whereas there were several types of

information that were valid and necessary throughout the United Nations system. During the biennium 1998-1999, ISCC started a "United Nations system ExtraNet" project, to propose technical standards and to pilot a framework for development of not only the holistic ExtraNet, but also specific ExtraNets for designated groups requiring sharing of information. Technical standards were recommended in 1998 and a pilot implementation begun in 1999.

22. Building on the work done in the biennium 1998-1999, a task force led by IAEA (within SIG-NET) will continue the pilot to prove the viability and utility of a United Nations system ExtraNet. The pilot implementation will support access to a number of information sources, including databases such as the union catalogue of United Nations system libraries and terminology databases, document repositories, on-line commercial information sources as arranged by the United Nations Consortium, and common administrative and staff support information, and, as appropriate, discussion areas. After evaluation, the pilot ExtraNet and a proposal for continued operation will be recommended to high-level CCAQ and the Organizational Committee (OC) for approval.

23. As noted already in the biennium 1998-1999, individual organizations cannot easily exchange **contact information** about staff members with each other. Therefore, building on the work done in the previous biennium defining the standard technology, a task force, led by ITU, will make use of the United Nations system ExtraNet technical environment to define a set of common contact elements for use throughout the system. The task force will develop a set of concrete, standardized data elements and a technology structure. The task force also will develop an implementation plan and supporting documentation, so that individual organizations can participate as appropriate.

24. A further specific implementation of the ExtraNet technology model could be an **Executive Information Network**, to allow ACC to use a common, secure technology to simplify the exchange of sensitive policy information during planning processes, as requested by OC. The Committee noted the existence of some similar technologies within the United Nations and its programmes. A task force, under the general leadership of the Internet Technologies group, SIG-NET (led by ILO), and making use of requirements defined by representatives of OC, will develop and pilot a technology model, for approval through the OC. The final recommendation to OC will include the recommendation of a provider for the continued operation and the outline of continuing operational costs.

Electronic archives strategies

25. The Committee noted that the fact that individual organizations did not have agreed common standards for electronic archiving of their information could lead to a loss of information, prevented sharing of common facilities and hindered the harmonization of electronic and non-electronic archives.

26. The Committee decided that a task force, under the general leadership of the Document and Archive Management group, SIG/DAS (led by UNCC), would propose a set of common system requirements and policy recommendations, for approval by the high-level CCAQ. This task force will work together with general archives groups throughout the system, including specifically the United Nations Common System Working Group on Archives and the Geneva archives group.

On-line information retrieval

27. During the biennium 1998-1999, ISCC has developed a pilot system for "one-stop shopping" which searches most Web sites of United Nations system organizations with a single search (UNIONS), plus the metadata scheme and the indexing vocabulary (UNIVOC) that are necessary to categorize Web sites and documents for accurate retrieval. The work begun in these areas needs to be evaluated and recommendations made for regular operation and support of these facilities.

28. A task force under the general supervision of the Documents and Archives group, SIG/DAS (led by UNCC), will develop recommendations for support and operation of the above information retrieval features. In particular, the task force will evaluate the opportunities for improving the UNIONS searching facility either through in-house development or through commercial software products; the metadata scheme will be illustrated and confirmed as a core metadata set for Web pages and documents and a plan for dissemination of the standard developed; and the UNIVOC standard indexing vocabulary will be improved and a plan for dissemination and regular maintenance of the standard developed.

On-line commercial information providers

29. Building on the success of the United Nations Consortium during 1999, ISCC will continue to support the Consortium during the biennium 2000-2001, expanding the types of information provided, developing usage statistics and working with user groups of permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations to make

United Nations Consortium-licensed information available to them electronically. These activities will be under the leadership of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, within SIG/LIS.

Union catalogue for the United Nations system

30. Developed since 1995, the UNCAPS union catalogue for United Nations system libraries will be tested during 2000. This system provides a single site where Member States and staff members may find information about the holdings of United Nations system libraries. It also provides a means for libraries to share cataloguing information with each other, thus avoiding duplication. A task force, led by United Nations Headquarters, within SIG/LIS, will monitor the pilot test, develop evaluation criteria and evaluate the pilot. After evaluation, if appropriate, a proposal for continuing UNCAPS operation will be presented.

31. If the evaluation is positive, a second UNCAPS project plan will be prepared, to expand the services of UNCAPS.

United Nations system information sites

32. During the biennium 1998-1999, ISCC has developed a pilot system for finding the location of the hundreds of depository libraries around the world (DEPOLIB). The Committee has decided that this successful system should be expanded to include references to all locations where information issued by United Nations system organizations can be found, that is to say, depository libraries, small and/or field libraries, United Nations information centres and so forth. A task force, led by the World Bank within SIG/LIS, will develop the database model showing the location and contact information for all United Nations system information locations. Once in production, the contents will be maintained by the headquarters organizations. A proposal for continued regular operation will be developed by the task force as well.

Digital libraries initiative

33. Many United Nations system organizations have plans to create "digital libraries" to preserve key information in standard digital formats and make the wide variety of electronic resources of the United Nations agencies more available to staff, Member State representatives and the public. ISCC has decided that a clearing house on digital library initiatives should be established. Such a clearing house will be a mechanism for sharing information on United Nations system digital

library initiatives, and will identify or develop standards and recommended practices required for successful implementation of United Nations system digital libraries. The benefits will be preservation in standard digital formats of key information; simpler, unified access to the wide variety of United Nations system information available in digital form; and reduced times and costs for United Nations system organizations creating digital libraries.

34. A task force, under the leadership of ILO within SIG/LIS, will develop a mechanism for maintaining and sharing information on digital library initiatives and their components. The task force will identify areas requiring standards and recommended practices.

35. The task force will investigate specific areas of concern and develop recommendations for further work in areas where standards and recommended practices will be important, including, *inter alia*, organization and technical design, collection development and assessment, client satisfaction, network considerations for successful federation of independent databases, Extensible Markup Language (XML) and related metadata enhancements, search and navigation, and intellectual property considerations. The core task force group will be augmented with members interested in focusing on specific areas.

E. Other high-priority areas

Telecommunications

36. The Committee noted that the Inter-Agency Telecommunications Advisory Group becomes a formal part of ISCC as of January 2000 as the ISCC's Telecommunications Advisory Group (SIG-TAG). Eight general objectives have already been defined, namely: to facilitate communications in the field for supporting the security of staff, in cooperation with the office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD); to facilitate links among the telephone systems of different parts of the United Nations system, reducing dependency on switchboard operators; to facilitate a common services approach for an e-mail to data radio gateway; to introduce "Voice over IP" services (VOIP); to introduce additional efficiencies in the use of videoconferencing; to establish new space-based services; to identify cost-sharing opportunities and possibly economies of scale through common action in different domains of the telecommunication field; and to promote robust and

economical connectivity between Headquarters offices and country and field offices.

37. The Committee greeted the ongoing discussions about priority projects in the telecommunications group, and noted that areas being discussed currently include coordination on the implementation of security communications in the initial phases of a humanitarian emergency; identifying cost-sharing opportunities and possibly economies of scale; and promoting robust and economical connectivity between Headquarters offices, country and field offices.

38. The Committee noted that the telecommunications advisory group plan to meet in February 2000. The Committee requested the group to consider promptly which of the above areas should be considered for high-priority projects. Such recommendations for high-priority projects should still be received in 1999, in order to ensure that funds can be reserved and work can start promptly.
