



**Chief Executives Board
for Coordination**14 October 2003

**HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT (HLCM)
Sixth Session
New York, 20-21 October 2003****SECOND MEETING OF THE ICT NETWORK
Geneva, 24 September 2003**

1. The ICT Network held its second meeting at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 24 September 2003. Mr. Roger Jones, Director Administrative Services, IMO and member of HLCM, chaired the meeting.
2. The list of participants and agenda of the meeting are contained in Annexes I & II respectively. UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA participated via videoconferencing from New York in the afternoon. The agenda focused on follow-up to the informal meeting held in April 2003 in New York as well as on a number of additional items of concern. It included (1) Overview of developments since the last session of the ICT Network, implications and future directions; (2) Progress report on CEB projects; (3) Update on the work of the Open Source task force; (4) Update on information security issues; (5) ICT Network Communication Tools (Replacement for Quickplace); (6) Update/Status of ICT procurement issues; and (7) Follow-up to the recently held ITAG and Knowledge Management meetings.

I. Progress reports on CEB projects:**A. The UN system Extranet**

3. Eduardo Blinder (UN/ITSD) gave a presentation on the status of the UN system Extranet. He noted that, 55 UN system entities and all but three CEB organizations, were now connected.
4. He noted further that some field offices of member organizations had requested to be connected directly via a separate VPN rather than through their Headquarters. In view of the resources that this would require, ITSD had taken a policy decision only to allow connections only through a central Headquarters focal point.
5. With regard to applications, he noted that with the recent addition of the UNSECOORD website, there were now 5 applications on the Extranet: the Directory of Senior Officials

(DOSO), the UN terminology database, UN Cartographic materials, the UN system Chart and locator and UNSECOORD. This last application, which contained security and travel advisories, had greatly increased traffic to the Extranet site. An application containing salary and allowances information would also be added.

6. A discussion ensued on the future content and management of the Extranet. Reference was made to the document prepared for the last HLCM meeting on “the ICT agenda with particular reference to the Content, Cost & Management of the UN system Extranet (CEB/2003/HLCM/R.8). It was noted that the original intent for the Extranet was to establish a platform that would allow for the availability in one place of information for staff that was not readily available elsewhere. While the IT managers were not directly involved in managing the content of the Extranet, they could make suggestions as to additional applications. There were a few that would be easy to add and would add great value as information resources. These included resources such as **Intranet staff directories**, a database on internal vacancies, on-line resources from the Library Consortium and generic job descriptions. It was noted that an essential component of any application should be that it would have an “owner” so that its maintenance and updating of information could be ensured. **It was agreed to pursue the above-mentioned applications and then canvass other inter-agency networks to solicit ideas for further applications. It was further agreed that the CEB should have a person in charge of the Extranet content—an Extranet Editor—that would report on progress in this regard to the HLCM.**

7. The Director CEB Secretariat recalled with regard to the importance of adding staff Directories, the Chairperson HLCM had, following the Iraq attack, requested the establishment of emergency email network to allow communications to all UN system staff. He noted that responses were still being awaited from numerous organizations of the system.

8. The WB presented an approach to Extranet connectivity based on newer authentication protocols, which are focused on the individual user rather than on organizations. The technology is quite promising as it would allow remote connectivity to the Extranet and would not tax the firewall infrastructure as much as the VPN approach. However, the technology is still needs to be fully developed and requires proprietary solutions. The proposal was to look for organizations interested in running a pilot using this new technology, which could co-exist with the current VPN based Extranet. **It was agreed that the proposal would be circulated and subsequently placed on the new ICT collaborative platform for interested members to explore.**

B. UN System search engine

9. On behalf of UN/ITSD lead agency on the UN system search engine project, Eduardo Blinder gave an update on the status of the project. He noted that regrettably much less progress had been made with the pilot than expected due to a number of factors. Due to constraints and limitations related to the manner in which the Google appliance requires the content to be organized, it had taken longer than expected to get Google up and running for un.org. The system went live on un.org on 12 September.

10. Once that was done, UN/ITSD had started to crawl a number of UN system sites and had run into similar problems: size of collections—capacity issues; bandwidth problems; and less than optimum response and cooperation from Google.

11. He noted that at this juncture and in order to move forward it would be necessary to approach Google at a higher level—in other words to up the ante to ensure that some of these critical issues are solved. It was thus a work in progress and therefore it was not envisaged at this stage that a report would be presented to HLCM at its forthcoming session.

12. **It was agreed that UN/ITSD would keep ICT managers informed of progress being made in this regard and that any future crawls would be coordinated ahead of time with the organizations in question.**

II. Update on the work of the Open Source task force

13. Tony Salmon (UNCC) made a presentation indicating that interest in Open Source Software (OSS) was growing rapidly, as evidenced by initiatives undertaken by large IT companies and a growing awareness of software security issues. As agreed at the recent informal meeting of the ICT Network, a task force had been constituted, comprising interested members of the ICT Network. Accepting the kind offer of the ILO to use their facilities, a Bulletin Board had been set up and some progress had been made in the first objective of the task force, which is to assess what is being done in the UN system in this regard. Mr. Salmon expressed some concerns, however, that a Bulletin Board alone is not a sufficient means to carry this project forward and proposed to set up a meeting, including video-conference links if justified, to advance the work on a more programmed basis. He also proposed that membership of this group should be widened to include all ICT managers, in order to ensure that major issues were considered by all and not confined to OSS aficionados. In the discussion that followed, continued support was expressed for the initiative. Some participants noted the adoption of OSS initiatives in other public sector organizations while others noted the need to highlight potential costs and risks as well as advantages in any proposals that might be made. **It was agreed that the task force should attempt to produce a paper on this subject for consideration at the next meeting of the ICT Network.**

III. Update on Information security issues

14. Tony Salmon, as convenor of the working group that elaborated the security of information template adopted by the Network last year, also introduced this item. He noted that from recent exchanges it was clear that the discussion on security needed to be broadened to include issues such as internet security and information privacy issues.

15. With regard to internet security it was noted that there had been an exchange of available policies through ISCC but that the exercise might need to be repeated given that much has changed over the past few years. The UN noted that an Administrative Instruction on the “Acceptable Uses of ICT Infrastructure” was about to be issued and would be soon made available to all members of the Network.

16. With regard to information privacy it was noted that ICT managers were increasingly being called upon to make decisions as to the provision of information regarding staff members that would not be legal in many countries. The question was thus asked: what is the information that it is ok to log and document and are there any guidelines for using this information? G.P. Roz (ITC) noted a) that the network of Legal Officers of the UN system had recently discussed these issues and that it would be useful to receive their documents and conclusions and b) that today's technology compiled, as a matter of course, a lot of information and that staff should be informed of this. He further noted that in ITC no information was provided unless the request came from a very high source.

17. **The Network concluded, this was not an exclusively ICT issue but rather also involved the HR and Legal areas. It was agreed that if there were any policies in this regard they should be exchanged and that consultations should be undertaken with the Legal officers and the HR network to see if it would be possible to arrive at some common principles from which everyone could work.**

IV. Update/status of ICT procurement issues

18. Eduardo Blinder briefed the Network on the latest developments regarding the Master agreement with Microsoft which was close to being signed. He noted that the price being negotiated was \$125 yearly per desktop and that eventually it might come down to \$100 for desktop software excluding the operating system. Even though this was a significant reduction organizations would still need to decide whether it was worth it to renew licenses at this cost on a yearly basis. UNHCR noted their hope that this rate being negotiated by the UN would be better than their current D-10% level Select contract for purchase of individual software which covered 12 organizations and would expire in June next year. UNDP/IAPSO also informed that it has a Select agreement with Microsoft at price level D minus 10%. All UN agencies can take advantage of the agreement through a Large Account Reseller (LAR) or through IAPSO's E-commerce system UNWebBuy (www.unwebbuy.org). Currently no negotiation is taking place between UNDP/IAPSO and Microsoft for enterprise software agreements.

19. It was noted that there should be a **Listing (or DB) of purchase agreements for IT equipment**. In this connection UNDP/IAPSO informed the Network that at the last Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group (IAPWG) meeting held in Warsaw, Poland, it was agreed to revamp the United Nations Common Supply Database (UNCSD). The re-development of the website has been outsourced to Dun & Bradstreet and the new site will be launched in 4th quarter 2003. The new site will enable potential suppliers to the UN system to register their company and products online. UN procurement officers will then be able to search for suppliers and goods based on UNCCS codes. It is also the intention as part of the new site to have a listing of all Long Terms Agreements (LTAs) within the UN system. The UNCSD Secretariat has sent out a survey to all UN Agencies asking them to list all available LTAs. Once the data is collected and analyzed the intention is to make it available on the UNCSD site. **In addition to LTAs, a list of other contracts with preferential rates for UN System purchases should be maintained. If this does not belong on UNCSD then it could be posted on the ICT network site.**

V. ICT Network Communication Tools--(Replacement for Quickplace)

20. The CEB Secretariat noted that in follow-up to the request at the informal meeting in April to secure a working communication tool for the ICT Network within three months, it had undertaken a review of requirements and then matched them to three alternatives to Quickplace. A demonstration at the meeting was for e-Workspaces-- a collaborative tool designed for UNAIDS. The recommendation is to utilize this electronic communication tool for ICT network and the Librarian network (infosharing). It was noted that UNAIDS had had much success with this tool and that it was offering it to the CEB free of charge. Only if major changes were necessary to the software would any costs be incurred. **The Network thanked UNAIDS for its kind offer and agreed that the CEB Secretariat should proceed with the implementation of the tool. Members also requested that all documents formerly on the ISCC Quickplace and WebBoard be migrated to it so they could be consolidated in one place.** CEB secretariat noted that it would proceed with implementation, that registration for the application would be sent shortly so as to be able to open the new communication tool to its members by mid October. It was also agreed that "lead agencies" would moderate specific area discussions e.g. Open Source would be moderated by Tony Salmon.

VI. Areas where further specific work is required

A. Status of inventory

21. Eduardo Blinder informed the Network that UN ICT inventory system—eAssets which had been offered by the UN for use as a UN system tool—had been redesigned and was now ready for deployment. He suggested that it be placed on the Extranet so that Network members could get an idea of how the application works and what would be required in order to maintain it. **The Network agreed to proceed in this manner and revert to the question once members had had a chance to familiarize themselves with the application**

B. Costs of ICT

22. The discussion on costs was based on the preliminary results of a survey circulated by ITU. The Network agreed that, as has been the case on previous occasions, and given different definitions and budgetary methods within the UN system the figures compiled were non comparable and would invite misinterpretation by governing bodies. It was noted that treatment of central vs. distributed IT services varies among the organizations and ICT expenses included in programmatic activities are generally not included in the figures. Some organizations may have a very large part of their ICT costs "hidden" because they are not centrally managed. In showing ICT services as a % of budget, the administrative budget rather than overall budget should be used as base (e.g., for WFP, UNHCR or UNDP).

23. Nevertheless there was the view that there would be a benefit for system organizations to agree on a number of ICT budget categories which all ICT managers have to work with. It was noted that some of these costs have become utility costs and should be taken out of the budget equation ie. non-discretionary versus discretionary costs. In this connection it was noted that running costs needed to be separated from development costs and that it would be useful to define the difference for management. It was further noted that for certain types of activities

there are industry standard definition that should be used consistently. The Chair noted that particularly in times of zero nominal growth management needed to be informed about the “fixed ICT costs” that cannot be pared back. **It was agreed that the CEB secretariat would undertake a survey of those costs considered non-discretionary or fixed costs by ICT managers.**

VII. Overview of developments since the last session of the ICT Network—implications and future directions

24. The Director CEB Secretariat gave an overview of a number of recent meetings that had a bearing on the work of ICT managers in the system. He noted that the profile of ICT was growing in organizations and that the more pro-active approach taken by the Network was beginning to produce concrete results. It was important to continue to search for practical solutions which would provide value added to senior managers and member states. ICT managers were also getting increasingly involved in all areas of programmes and senior managers were learning more about using the assets. **It was agreed that it might be useful to have increased communication between ICT managers and the HLCM. The Chairman would explore modalities with his HLCM colleagues.**

25. Sergei Kambalov of the UN ICT Task Force provided a briefing on the Brainstorming session held in Geneva in July to discuss the GA resolution calling for a UN system ICT strategy. He noted that the report of that meeting would soon be finalized and distributed and would form the basis for a report for the GA after being cleared through HLCM and the CEB. He noted that the main feature of the session was the interaction between ICT focal points, UN system senior managers both in the programme and management areas and the members of the Task Force.

26. With regard to WSIS it was suggested that since most organizations would have exhibits there, it would be useful to produce a single leaflet describing the UN system participation as a whole. **The idea for a single leaflet describing UN system participation in WSIS was endorsed and the CEB secretariat agreed to follow it up with the secretariat of the ICT Task Force.**

VIII. Follow-up to recently held ITAG and Information Sharing and Knowledge Management meetings

27. Andre Spatz (UNICEF) noted that a very productive meeting of the Inter-agency Telecommunications Advisory Group (ITAG) had met on 9-10 June in Washington at the invitation of the IMF. He noted that the meeting had focused on coordination among agencies in telecommunications and other areas. The participants unanimously agreed that the ITAG is an extremely useful and productive group, from which very successful results have been achieved, and that the ITAG should continue to meet on a regular basis. The group had agreed to increase their work and contacts and would be holding another meeting in Europe 3rd week in November. He informed the Network that no report was yet available because of the lack of secretariat support (incl. posting of documents) and requested on behalf of ITAG members--that this situation be remedied.

28. The Director of the CEB Secretariat noted that he would be in touch shortly and that secretariat services would be provided for future meetings. In addition, a workspace would be created for ITAG on the new collaboration tool. This would all contribute to strengthening the link between ITAG and the ICT Network. The representative of UNICEF also stressed that if ever there was a time to work together on telecommunications and emergency communications it was now. In this connection he wanted to bring to the attention of the Network and the Secretariat that coordination/duplication seemed to be taking place in various forums and **that there needed to be some clarification in this regard to ensure that ITAG recommendations were accepted and implemented.**

29. The good working cooperation between ITAG and WGET (Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications) was discussed. The WGET focus is on cooperation and interoperability of telecommunications for disaster relief with and in the field, while ITAG deal with the entire range of telecommunications issues for all organizations. **It was agreed that the WGET and ITAG meetings should be held together as much as possible. All WGET proposals for standards impacting the UN system and services would be brought up into the ITAG for review and endorsement.**

30. Denise Pelissier (UNESCO) informed the Committee on the recently held meeting of Knowledge-sharing and Information Management Network (formerly SIG on Libraries and Information Systems—Geneva 15-17 September 2003). The meeting was well attended with 60 information professionals from 30 UN entities. She noted that a report would be available soon and that she would also like to appeal for more consistent secretariat support. The KSIM network had emphasized the need for increased communication and cooperation between the Information Management and Information Technology professionals. Ms. Pelissier highlighted also the offer of cooperation from the KSIM Working Group to assist with content selection and organization of the Extranet and a request to CEB that it ensure that organizations make available their publications (in all formats) and databases to UN system members free of charge.

IX. Other matters

31. (a) Norman Sanders (UNDP) informed the Network that a user group for PeopleSoft had recently been established—IOUPNet. He noted that as chair of the group he would shortly be circulating additional information and invited any organizations using PeopleSoft to be in contact with him.

(b) Andre Spatz (UNICEF)- noted that a meeting of the users groups of SAP systems was established and was scheduled to meet in June, but due to conflicts in schedules from the key participating agencies, had to be postponed to later in the year.

32. The representative of the World Bank informed the Committee on further details regarding the Web Conference they are organizing in Washington DC on 28-29 December 2003. He agreed to circulate additional information for members.

33. With regard to the timing and venue of the next meeting the Director CEB Secretariat noted that after the Chair presented the report of this meeting to HLCM consultations would be undertaken as to the timing for another meeting, particularly in view of his suggestion that the ICT managers coincide with a HLCM meeting.

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ANNEX I

MEETING OF ICT MANAGERS

Geneva, 24 September 2003

List of Participants

Chairman : Roger Jones

Meeting Secretary : Karina Gerlach

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ANNEX II

ICT Network Meeting Palais des Nations, Geneva 24 September 2003

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 2. Overview of developments since the last session of the ICT Network—implications and future directions.**
 - a. Over the past few months a number of meetings have been held whose outcomes have bearing for the future of the work of the ICT network and managers. These include: HLCM V (June 2003), ICT Task Force meeting in February 2003, Brainstorming meeting in Geneva (July 2003), and Crisis management and Information Technology meeting in Helsinki (September 2003). Another issue to be discussed is the preparations for the WSIS and UN system participation in it. The impact and lessons learned for ICT coordination from recent events such as the attack on the UN office in Baghdad will also be reviewed in the context of implications for future work.
 - b. Areas where further specific work is required**
 - Inventory: the need to inventory what exists in the UN system has been repeatedly emphasized as a priority action item. An update will be provided on the status of the UN Inventory system (named e-Assets) and the possibility of deploying it for UN system purposes
 - ICT Costs—common costs: it will be recalled that ISCC had discussed the possibility of aligning, to the extent, possible, the basis used for budgeting in ICT by various organizations of the system. Given the many difficulties in comparing the different financing schemes the project was not pursued. Nevertheless this issue is being raised time and again in various forums. ICT managers have discussed it in the context of the compendium of best practices; it has also been suggested that a working group be tasked with arriving at an agreement of which are the common (ICT) costs that are required for running an organization which could then be used as a basis for budgeting by all organizations of the system. In this connection, ITU recently circulated a questionnaire on ICT budgets with a view comparing costs—and its representative may wish to inform the participants of the results so far. UN representative might also wish to brief the Network on the outcome of the review of the UN ICT strategy by the ACABQ and the ensuing recommendations which might have a relevance for the system.
- 3. Progress report on CEB projects:**

- a. Extranet: status of connections and applications; in addition a discussion will be held on experience to date with the Extranet (VPN) platform and its implications for information sharing across UN system Organizations with a particular focus on security and authentication.
- b. UN system search engine: results of trial UN system crawls

4. Update on the work of the Open Source task force

- Tony Salmon will brief the Network on the work undertaken so far in this regard.

5. Update on information security issues

- a. Information Privacy policies and Issues: IAEA has noted that with increased focus on information security, ICT managers are often being asked to provide information on security logs and other monitoring information. Since national information privacy regulations do not apply to the UN and there are no comprehensive guidelines on this issue within the UN family, ICT managers are often left to make personal judgment in responding to investigation requests. The Network might wish to exchange current practices in this regard and whether it is an issue which should be further explored. (IAEA)

6. ICT Network Communication Tools—(Replacement for Quickplace)

- An update will be provided by the CEB Secretariat

7. Update/status of ICT procurement issues

- a. the UN will provide an update on the most recent developments in this area

8. Follow-up to recently held ITAG (May 2003) and KM (September 2003) meetings

9. Other matters

- a. Update on Web Conference to be hosted in November by World Bank
- b. Next meeting