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**Chief Executives Board  
for Coordination**

CEB/2006/HLCM/ICT/2  
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**ICT NETWORK  
Seventh Session  
WFP, Dubai, UAE, 17 October 2006**

[Discussion Summary and Conclusions](#)

**I. Opening of the Meeting**

1. The ICT Network opened with welcoming remarks from the Chairperson and the director of the WFP office in Dubai.
2. The Network welcomed new and returning participants, especially those who have not been able to attend recent meetings.

**II. Adoption of the Agenda**

3. The ICT Network adopted the agenda.

**III. System-wide ICT coherence**

4. The Chair briefed the Network on the outcome of the HLCM meeting (Rome, September 20 - October 1, 2006), which discussed the issues surrounding system-wide ICT coherence. The HLCM considered that closer ICT partnerships across agencies of the system could help achieve a high level of system-wide operational and managerial efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee expressed an interest in exploring the options for partnerships across agencies in specific ICT areas, particularly communications and other infrastructure operations, and requested the ICT Network to prepare, for the upcoming CEB meeting, a proposal to examine the costs, benefits and obstacles of pursuing closer coherence in these areas.
5. During the discussion, the Network underlined that a focused approach, identifying a small number of areas of highest impact or business value where ICT plays a mission critical role, would better serve the needs of collaborating agencies and the coherent and value-driven system-wide ICT strategy. Discussions further underscored the need to define collaborative

ventures in terms of their business value, noting that an emphasis on strategic or mission critical activities are more likely enjoy high-level support and sponsorship. Preparation for an avian influenza was identified by the Network as one example of an opportunity to provide technical solutions that respond to the need for business continuity.

6. Organizations noted several points worth considering:
  - (a) UNICEF cited the system-wide introduction of IPSAS as an area requiring substantial overhaul of current business processes, practices and ERP infrastructure, which must also be clearly factored in to the Network's approach to strategic change.
  - (b) UN Secretariat reminded the Network that multiple studies have been undertaken on the benefits of ERP consolidation and that the building of business cases did not always prove necessary since the programming need for business continuity was already addressed and documented. In this regard, it was suggested that studies undertaken by the UN Secretariat, which itself could be viewed as a microcosm of the UN system in terms of regional and management structure, be applied toward the evaluation of complex implementations.
  - (c) WFP highlighted the need for clear business benefits, internal sponsors and governance structure to ensure commitment and the ownership of initiatives and the sourcing of dedicated resources.
7. The Chair affirmed the need for focus on a small selection of priority areas, the identification of business drivers relevant to the system, aligned closely with high-level priorities, leveraging commitments already made.
8. Further discussion recognized the introduction of a governance mechanism as the immediate priority facing the Network. While accounting for the complexity of aligning strategic priorities across a disparate system of organizations, (each with their own business focus, internal structures and key performance metrics), requirements for governance reflected more on the construction and role of working groups, commissioned to pursue Network-led priorities and special interest groups operating independently. A two-tier approach toward their collective governance received unanimous approval. Clear ownership by lead agencies, high-level business sponsorship and reporting relationship with the Network were identified as prerequisites of any internal governance structure.
9. Before seeking further commitment from HLCM or other stakeholders or sponsors, it was agreed that financial and human capital required for the creation of business cases be internally sourced, apply inter-agency budget lines and source specialized personnel from each participating agency.

10. Regarding the specific issue of implementing a common ICT service model, the Network noted the existence of an array of technical, political as well as cultural obstacles. Whether it can deliver the added value that justifies the effort will remain unknown without high-level commitment and dedicated financial and human resources required for measuring its potential value. The proposed study would answer the call of member states to examine mechanisms to achieve efficiencies of operations, and provide a reliable, consistent, and cost-effective ICT platform upon which the system could build. It was noted that the design of a working model would also incorporate a shifting emphasis towards the implementation of strategic initiatives, identified by some as more worthy of emphasis than the mechanics of prioritizing.
11. It was agreed that a revised governance model will start with the pooling of a critical mass of interested agencies (early adopters), which themselves fund and resource initial studies responding to strategic priorities set by the Network.
12. The ICT Network agreed to develop a proposal to advance the study of these two initiatives and agreed to present their findings at the next HLCM meeting.

#### **IV. ICT Strategy: Business Cases Development**

##### **(a) Knowledge Sharing**

13. As Lead Agency, FAO presented a status report on the Knowledge Sharing Task Force (KSTF) in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The group's first meeting held by videoconference on July 18 focused on the role of knowledge sharing in three main areas: within UN system organizations, across organizations and between UN system organizations and NGOs, civil society and the private sector. It was noted that related other groups, including OIOS, JIU and UNDG, had already undertaken work in these areas and that further undertakings would leverage their findings and continue in a collaborative manner.
14. The main focus of the group was described as a business case for investment, linked to work of High Level Panel on System-wide coherence, which will include the identification of key success factors, and an audit of agency undertakings in this area, particularly solutions and constraints. Next steps for the group were highlighted as the distribution of a questionnaire to UN system organization to help identify activities in this area and the drafting of a work plan for agreement at the group's next meeting later in 2006 or early 2007, detailing the case for additional funding.
15. Discussions focused on the scope and nature of the Network's involvement in this initiative. The Network was reminded that the working group's terms

of reference were approved by HLCP and, as an HLCP working group, also involved other stakeholder and special interest groups within the UN system. Reference was made to the value of close collaboration with UNDG and the benefits of leveraging the wide-ranging expertise and interests that surround the topic.

16. The Network thanked FAO for the progress made in taking the lead in this area, which recognizes the Network's vested interest as both consumers of information and solution providers and in the value of collaboration with key players in this wide-ranging area.
17. Recognizing that the work of the KSTF constituted a broader, and therefore, separate, activity, the Network requested that the ICT Network working group on knowledge sharing pursue a more focused approach to the role of ICT within the framework of knowledge sharing.

**(b) Sourcing Strategies for ICT Services**

18. As Agency Lead of the Sourcing Strategies for ICT services priority business case, FAO presented a status report of the Working Group. During the first meeting, held by videoconference on July 6, the group agreed upon its Terms of Reference and outlined a work plan. Two areas in particular were identified as worthy of further investigation, namely: the maturity of ICT Service Sourcing within the UN system and more specifically, which services to be considered for consolidation and inter-agency approach. In order to help identify current out-sourcing and off-shoring activities, a Gartner self-assessment questionnaire, to be distributed to the Network, will focus on maturity of sourcing activities and service-by-service contracts. Analysis of collected data will lead to the identification of services to pursue, the development of a detailed work plan and funding request (containing a cost-benefit analysis for each service) and ultimately the building of a business case. FAO affirmed that an open mind currently defines the study's wide scope and that issues of potential overlap with other related business cases, such as data centre consolidation, will not be addressed until candidate services have been identified.
19. The Network approved the presented approach, which will recommended that ICT Network members answer the adapted Gartner self-assessment questionnaire as a next step.

**(c) Enterprise Resource Planning (and Payroll)**

20. As Lead Agency, UNJSPF presented an overview of recent progress made by the ERP working group. It was explained that the group's mandate had evolved since the working group was created, from one of a single ERP and payroll system to a process of identifying the business benefits of sharing smaller and focused applications in the area of ERPs and payroll systems. In

particular, reference was made to the interest a common disbursement facility for the UN system generated at HLCM. It was recognized that due to sunken costs in ERP investments by individual agencies, further discussion on a single ERP system did not warrant more emphasis than further investigation into other value adding alternatives.

21. Although it was recognized that the consolidation of ERP functions requires discussion at high-levels within UN organizations, the Chair underscored the role of the ICT Network in the process of defining the best solutions. Organizations, notably UNHCR and UNICEF, voiced the need to further the harmonization of payroll processes, such as entitlements, leveraging proposed HR reforms in UN Secretariat, or consider the outsourcing and off-shoring of ERP business functions as an alternative solution.
22. The discussion highlighted the importance of a high-level business sponsor within the UN System and the commitment of HLCM to fund further work in the area of disbursement was noted. The Network agreed that the opportunity for a common ERP solution had passed and that further analysis of ERP platform unification should move towards a two track solution, with lead agencies acting as proponents of the two main platforms, Oracle and SAP. It was requested that further definition of the working group's priority areas of opportunity be identified in close collaboration with the HR and Finance Networks.

**(d) Training**

23. Giving specific examples of how an absence of ICT training, particularly at the executive management level, impedes the business sponsorship of ICT Strategy, the working group on ICT Training (led by UNCTAD and ILO) presented four initiatives for consideration and possible implementation:
  - ICT Briefings to High Level Management;
  - Seminars for the Executive Management Team;
  - ICT module in Management/Leadership Development Program;
  - Organizational Politics for ICT managers.
24. Discussion on the first initiative affirmed the value of training material but questioned the expected gain from targeting high-level management. It was noted that the most effective channel for educating a high-level forum, such as HLCM may be internal to each organization, and begin with the education of executive management by ICT directors and CIOs. It was, therefore, concluded that further design of training solutions for the first initiative would address the need of ICT Network members themselves, to educate their own high-level representatives.
25. The Network thanked ILO and UNCTAD on the progress made in developing the case for education in ICT matters within all fields of the UN

system. It was agreed that further work be undertaken to define the content of the first initiative. The Network gave consent on the advancement of initiatives 2, 3 and 4.

**(e) Common Applications**

26. The CEB Secretariat Senior Advisor noted that only one organization (UNRWA) has volunteered to pursue this initiative, and that it was not possible to make progress in this manner. After a short discussion on the future of the working group, the Network decided to retain the working group and encouraged organizations to participate.

**(f) ICT Governance**

27. The CEB Secretariat Senior Advisor noted that the working group on ICT governance, best practice and business case development required a new chairperson to lead the efforts in this area.
28. UNDP volunteered to assume the leadership of this group. The Network thanked UNDP and encouraged the working group to reform to take these issues forward.

**V. ICT Knowledge Sharing**

**(a) Special interest group discussions**

29. The chair of the SAP-SIG (UNICEF) noted that this group continued its practice of best-practice sharing at its most recent meeting. The briefing noted that many organizations using the SAP ERP system leveraged their experiences across organizations, and presented examples in the case of IOM and the World Bank utilizing recruitment modules that had been implemented by other organizations. The chair stressed that for confidentiality reasons the group continued its policy of limiting its meetings to organizations actually using, or planning on using, the SAP software. In addition, the group continued its policy of inviting the vendor only to make targeted presentations.
30. UNDP presented the activities of the UNDG working group on ICT and indicated that the executive committee of UNDG highlighted the need to harmonize procurement, HR and other administrative rules to effectively implement the joint office programme. The presentation noted that the UNDG was currently working to identify the next joint offices to pursue, and that these would take a different approach from that used in the Cape Verde implementation. Specially, instead of consolidating ICT functions, they are looking at harmonizing the desktop and IT support. The presentation also noted that UNDP is now chairing the working group. Discussion centered on the role of the UNDG WG on ICT *vis a vis* the ICT

Network, and the Network decided to seek an integration of the UNDG WG into a special interest group of the ICT Network.

## **VI. ICT-Related Activities of the Joint Inspection Unit**

31. The CEB Secretariat Senior Advisor noted that the JIU had been addressing three ICT-related issues; common payroll, open-source software and electronic communication. The presentation noted that the open-source issue had been discussed in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and that no action had been taken and that the issue of a common payroll had not been discussed in any forum. The issue of electronic communication was a new subject due to be examined by the JIU in late 2006 and early 2007, and would focus on the use of voice over IP by organizations of the system.

## **VII. Other Matters**

### **(a) Participation in the ICT Network by non-UN organizations**

32. The CEB Secretariat Senior Advisor informed the Network that the Asian Development Bank had contacted the CEB Secretariat requesting to participate in the meetings. As no policy had been established, the Network was asked to consider the request and determine how to respond to similar requests in the future. The discussion within the Network explored the need for it to focus on resolving UN inter-agency ICT issues, and that other fora could be used to share experiences with non-UN, inter-governmental bodies. The Network agreed that the ICT Network would remain exclusive to UN bodies.

### **(b) Next Meeting**

33. The ICT Network agreed to coordinate its planning for the next meeting in the Spring of 2007 with the Management Committee of the International Computer Center.

Annex I

List of Participants

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
UN	Eduardo Blinder	Director, Information Technology Services Division
ILO	Nadim Habra	Chief, Information Technology and Communications
FAO	David Benfield	Director, Information Systems and Technology Division
UNESCO	Paulo Martins Serra	Director, Information Systems and Telecommunications
ICAO	Patrick O'Hare	Chief, Information and Communication Technology
WHO	Martin Catterall	Director, information Technology and Telecommunications Department
WMO	Anders Norsker	Chief, Information Technology Division
IMO	Vincent Job	Acting Director and Head IT and Information Technology
WIPO	Neil Wilson	Director, Information Technology Division and CIO
IFAD	Jose Stigliano	Director, ICD Division
IAEA	Tomás Beas	Acting Director, Division of Information Technology
WTO	Ghassam Karam	Director, Informatics Division
UNCTAD	Marc Weidmann	Chief, Information Technology Support
UNDP	Shirin Abdul Hamid	Chief Technology Officer
UNHCR	John Serrato	Director, Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications & Chief Information Officer
	Clare Goldie	Chief, Infrastructure & Telecommunications Service
UNICEF	Andre Spatz	Director, Information Technology Division
UNFPA	Rafiodin Malikzay	Chief, Management Information Services
WFP	Susana Malcorra	Deputy Executive Director, Administration and Chair, ICT Network
	Finbarr Curran	Regional Director, Admin. Svc. Support & Country Director, UAE
ICC	Andreas Christoforides	Director
IOM	Bernardo Mariano Joaquim Jr.	Chief, Information Technology and Communication
OCHCR	Najah Ahmed Didi	Systems Analyst



CTBTO	Johannes Winkels	Chief, Computer Infrastructure Section
UNOG	Lou McCaul	Chief, Information and Communication Technology Services, UNOG
UNJSPF	Paul Dooley*	Chief Information Officer
UN/DPKO	Rudy Sanchez	Chief, Communication and IT Services
CEB Secretariat	Kenneth Herman	Senior Advisor on information Management Policy Coordination
CEB Secretariat	Richard Maciver	ICT specialist and Webmaster