



**Chief Executives Board
for Coordination**CEB/2008/HLCM/ICT/9
1 September 2008

Meeting of the CEB ICT Network

Tenth Session

United Nations Development Programme, New York, 15 - 16 May 2008

Discussion Summary and Conclusions**I. Opening of the Meeting**

1. The ICT Network Chair opened the 10th session of the ICT Network by thanking UNDP for agreeing to host the session and with an introduction by Mr. Ali Al-Za'tari, Deputy Assistant Administrator, UNDP Bureau of Management. Mr. Al-Za'tari welcomed the ICT leadership to New York and spoke about the need for greater harmonization across the system. He noted that even though the system seemed to be underperforming when it comes to harmonization in many areas, the range of projects currently engaged in by the ICT community clearly shows a trend towards increased coordination in this important area. He stressed the effort within UNDP to ensure that ICT is included in the business decision-making processes as well as strategy setting. He concluded his remarks by observing the need for increased gender diversity within the ICT community, a comment endorsed by the ICT Network Chair.
2. The Chair welcomed new participants, particularly representatives from organizations who do not normally attend, and noted that this was the largest attendance in recent meetings. The Chair noted that changes will come to the Network in the form of new leadership as the current chair moves to a different role within the UN system. She noted the success that the Network has had in raising the profile of ICT issues within organizations and the HLCM and called upon the network to seize the opportunity to deliver in a way that can add value to organizations and the entire UN system. Regarding the new chair, consultations will take place within the HLCM, with the expectation that a new chair should continue to bring a business perspective to the leadership of this body.

II. Adoption of the Agenda

3. The ICT Network adopted the agenda with some amendments.

III. System-wide Business Practices

4. The Chair introduced the discussion on the system-wide business practices proposal by underscoring its significance as an opportunity to deliver high impact business value while also recognizing that much work remained on bringing this agenda forward. The Chair noted that the United Nations Secretary-General will present this proposal to member states for funding. Discussions within the network, therefore, would focus on the need to prepare for the moment funds have been received, including the development of a plan of action, validation of prepared cases, and next steps. The lead agency for each initiative was then invited to present the current status as well as potential next steps for discussion.

Update from the Working Group on Common Service Centres

5. WFP, as lead agency, presented the current status of the Common Service Centres initiative, referring to document CEB/2008/HLCM/ICT/5. The presentation stressed that while this initiative seeks to create an inter-agency capability for a broad range of administrative functions, a limited approach that concentrates on ICT services would provide a way to prove the concept prior to a broader implementation. The initiative proposes limiting the activities to desktop computer management; by standardizing on a limited number of desktop “images”, organizations who join the initiative can share the efficiencies gained through common procurement, management and support mechanisms. The proposal includes the establishment of a way to jointly define the standard desktop environment that would suit a broad range of agencies, along with the definition of approaches to jointly procure and support the common desktop, including the creation of a central support facility, either within a designated agency or an entity like the International Computer Centre. On this subject in particular, WFP referred to a recent discussion within the ICC Management Committee that outlined a desktop management service that might complement this initiative. WFP noted that this approach derived from its own experience of the challenges of globally managing a large number of computers in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Finally, WFP noted that by concentrating first on ICT-only activities progress could proceed more quickly, and that other administrative areas for common services, coming under the broader scope of this larger proposal, would be deferred to a later stage, and would involve other HLCM networks and special interest groups.
6. During the discussion, agencies offered support for this approach and raised the following issues and implications:
 - a. This initiative supports, and may benefit from, the development of a common system-wide ICT architecture, which would allow the scope for common ICT services to expand relatively quickly.
 - b. Some agencies suggested that implementing a common desktop presents many challenges, mostly due to the complexities of desktop configuration even within one agency. However, agencies also noted that many

- commonalities may exist and that a study of the desktop environment across the system would inform this process.
- c. UNDG notes that developing a common infrastructure, including desktop configurations, have already been explored and implemented in country offices within the “delivering as one” framework. These two activities will require close coordination to ensure a harmonized approach that meets the needs of both the country offices as well as and agency headquarters.
 - d. Agencies noted that the harmonization of software licenses represents a key ingredient of this initiative since organizations currently negotiate separately with large software vendors, like Microsoft, even though across the system the same basic desktop platform has been implemented. The Network, in this vein, called upon the CEB to discuss with the procurement network methods to allow for cross-agency sharing of negotiated contracts for software and serves negotiated.
 - e. Organizations discussed the role that the ICC could play in this initiative specifically noting that while ICC could not act in a pure “procurement” capacity, it regularly obtains software and services on behalf of partners when these are part of a specific service delivery agreement.
7. Outcome: The Network called upon the CEB Secretariat to facilitate the collection of software agreements organizations currently have in place with their major vendors, to the extent possible given any contractual privacy concerns and to Interact with the Procurement network to discuss ways and means to enable one agency to take full advantage of the terms and conditions of contracts negotiated by another agency.

Update from the Working Group on Common Data Centres

8. UNHCR, as lead agency, reminded the Network that the study on Common Data Centre facilities aims to determine the value of consolidating the operation of these facilities, including improved disaster recovery capabilities. In presenting the current status of the initiative, UNHCR referred to document CEB/2008/HLCM/ICT/8 and noted that the United Nations system already has an entity that functions as a common data centre, the International Computer Centre, and indicated that the thrust of the proposed approach was to build on this capacity. The proposed study, therefore, would examine how organizations can capitalize on the existing capacity within ICC as well as how ICC can better orient its services to satisfy the broader requirements of UN system organizations. The presentation noted that, like the common service centre initiative, this initiative encompasses a broader objective; to identify agency opportunities for consolidating data center operations, and the objective of the proposal was to initially limit the scope in order to assess the opportunities. As the initial study focused on identifying opportunities for ICC across the UN system, ICC offered to provide funding for this component through its working capital fund. Finally, noting that the ICT leadership of UNHCR was about to change, the Network was also asked to consider a new lead agency for the project.

9. Outcome: The Network endorsed the proposal to initially limit the scope of the study and welcomed ICC's offer to provide funding for a study of this limited scope. The Network thanked UNHCR for its leadership of this initiative and welcomed the offer of IAEA to assume this role. The Network looked forward to a progress report at a future meeting.

Working Group on Internationally recognized standards

10. Presenting the Internationally Recognized Standards initiative, UNICEF, as lead agency, recalled that the objective is to harmonize the implementation of standards that allow for improved management of ICT activities, as opposed to technical standards. While stressing that the development of a common system-wide technical architecture should not be downplayed, UNICEF notes that every organization is being confronted with the need to adopt management practices that allow for more streamlined and transparent operations. The presentation further emphasized the value of organizations sharing the implementation of the standards outlined in this initiative in order to achieve economies in the analysis phase. For example, UNICEF noted that its current plan includes the implementation of ITIL 3, an activity that will also likely engage many agencies.
11. During the discussion, agencies noted the importance of this initiative, especially since the primary role of the Network is to establish system-wide policy in the ICT area.
12. Outcome: Noting that it may be unaffordable for each organization to implement these standards individually, the Network agreed that the appropriate approach is for the ICT community to share these costs and experiences for each standard. In this vein, the Network agreed that the initiative should establish a level of compliance with each standard that is both practical and affordable, and that the working group for this initiative considers developing different levels of compliance along with a timeline to allow organizations to engage with their appropriate internal counterparts, like the auditors, in a systematic manner.

Working Group on Business Case Development and Costing

13. The UN Secretariat, as lead agency for the Business Case Development and Costing initiative, noted that this initiative involves two different, but inter-related, activities that describe how ICT operates within an organization. While emphasizing the importance of a business case template for ICT projects, the UN Secretariat suggested that this initiative would also benefit from the development of an international enterprise architecture that broadly outlines how ICT projects align with the needs of an organization. The presentation also noted that some work had already been done on developing a common business case template and further work through this initiative should complete this task, whereas an enterprise architecture would take more time. On the issue of cost benchmarking, the presentation recalled that efforts in this direction had been made by the International Finance Institutions (IFI) which could be shared with the Network as a foundation

upon which to build. The UN Secretariat noted that the intention in this effort is not for all agencies to become similar in their spending patterns, but to provide a mechanism whereby the investment in ICT by agencies could be better managed, and benchmarking provides a tool for this purpose.

14. During the discussion, agencies offered support for this approach and noted the difficulty of appropriately calculating the true costs of in-sourced services, like help desks and data centers, pointing out that these calculations do not always include the true operating costs. In addition, agencies noted that this initiative links very closely with the initiative for international standards. For example, the Prince2 project management standard includes templates and procedures for developing business cases.
15. Outcome: The UN Secretariat, through the CEB Secretariat, would share the benchmarking templates developed by the IFI's as a basis for further development in this area.

Working Group on the harmonization of ERP practices

16. While introducing the initiative on the harmonization of ERP practices, the ICT Network Chair noted that due to its scale and complexity the Network must ensure that the approach presented is both realistic and achievable. Furthermore, in response to a request from the HLCM, the Network had aligned the agency leads for this initiative with the three main ERP implementations of Oracle (ILO), PeopleSoft (UNDP) and SAP (WFP). The International Labour Organization (ILO), speaking for the lead agencies, stressed that achieving significant results requires the participation of the other inter-agency management networks, including Finance and Budget, Human Resources and Procurement. While the ICT Network could focus on developing common procedures for managing the technical aspects of ERP implementations, the value of this initiative lay in its ambition to harmonize the business practices that underpin these complex applications. Agencies noted that some work has been accomplished in this direction through the ERP special interest groups, CABIO and SAP-SIG.
17. During the discussions, UNDP, as lead for the PeopleSoft component, as well as other agencies, noted the importance of a harmonized ERP approach, both technically and from a business process perspective, to achieving the vision of a one-UN at the country level. In addition, the UN Secretariat noted that its current efforts to implement a new ERP application would benefit from business practices that built upon what other agencies had created.
18. Outcome: The Network affirmed that this initiative should remain as it was originally specified to include a technical and a business component, with the latter supported by an inter-disciplinary team comprised of experts from ICT, finance, budget and other related departments to construct a common approach to business practices that support ERP operations.

Working Group on the UN System Portal

19. CEB Secretariat provided an update of the case for a unified UN system portal, serving all organizations and their stakeholders respectively in the need to publish, relate and access relevant and up-to-date information. The group was reminded that this initiative also addressed the need for an improved image for the UN system as an authoritative and coherent knowledge provider. The approach places emphasis on the adoption of common publishing standards (on an existing information architecture) to introduce a new web presence and related web services which complement, as opposed to compete with, current publishing practices. The target was defined as a scalable content management framework, which ensures capacity for future expansion of content types, formats and sources.
20. As remarked by UNICEF, there remains the possibility to address other sources of structured and unstructured information than those specified. Because this proposal addresses the communication and information access needs of UN system organizations and their stakeholders respectively, further work was required to either widen or narrow the scope. Discussion among the group suggested an initial emphasis to be placed on serving the general public with improved content management practices. The Working (comprising ILO, UNHCR and UN Secretariat) expanded to include the World Bank, committing their experience and expertise in Information Architecture to the delivery of a detailed proposal. Furthermore, in response to questions about hosting this type of tool, the International Computer Centre (ICC) suggested that, in the interest of system-wide harmonization and administrative convergence between the ICT Network and the ICC, the ICC was prepared to host this tool without cost to the CEB. The Network, and the CEB Secretariat, welcomed this offer and agreed to pursue it further.
21. Outcome: No changes were proposed to the business practice in its presented form. Attentions of the Working Group would however focus on scoping the solution on the basis of a validated UN system information architecture. An inter-agency survey directed to centralized web teams would provide an initial step towards this end.

IV. ICT implications for IPSAS implementations

22. With the UN system moving towards the adoption of IPSAS, many agencies are confronting the ICT challenges associated with implementing this accounting standard. Some agencies have discovered that ICT-related costs surrounding IPSAS implementation have gone well beyond initial estimates. FAO presented to the Network an overview of its own experiences, including the financial impact and change management process necessary to support IPSAS compliance by the specified target date of 2010. The fundamental message from FAO is that an in-depth analysis of the implementation requirements for IPSAS revealed a greater cost to the agency than initially expected, mostly in terms of the business operational changes necessary to support IPSAS.

23. During the discussion, the ICT Network Chair pointed out that implementing IPSAS is not a compliance project but rather an initiative addressing the need for greater transparency, accountability and comparability. It was recognized that migrating from the current UNSAS standard to IPSAS can incur a significant cost, especially when placed within a tight time-frame for full implementation.
24. The Network thanked FAO for its presentation.

V. ICT-Related JIU Studies

25. Following the decision of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to pursue ICT-related studies on "IT Hosting Services" and "Management of Internet Websites", the ICT Network discussed the focus of these studies amid concern that their results should provide clear benefit to the entire UN system. While noting the value of investigation in these areas, the Network expressed reservations on their scope, clarity of purpose and the value of some survey questions, which did not adequately accommodate differences between organization mandates, structures, costing and performance metrics. Further discussion recognized the role of the ICT Network to ensure these studies meet the needs of the UN system for the benefit of Member States. ICC noted that it had received a draft of the questionnaire proposed by JIU and had requested substantial changes to its content.
26. Outcome: Noting the need to quickly respond to the JIU, the Network agreed that a task force, consisting principally of the members of the ICC Management Committee Advisory Group, along with the CEB Secretariat, would convene as a special working group to redraft the questionnaire on ICT hosting as input into the JIU report preparation process.

VI. Common Directory Project

27. The United Nations Development Group ICT Tasking Group updated the Network on activities related to the pilot implementation of the common directory project. The Network was informed that following the recent conclusion of the pilot phase, further work was necessary to mainstream the common directory solution in country office locations, including the development of an RFP to evaluate technical solutions as well as a governance mechanism to oversee the project implementation and operation.
28. Outcome: Following the full endorsement from the ICT Network, a Common Directory Working Group led by UNDP (including UNJSPF, ILO, WB, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and CEB Secretariat) would draft the Terms of Reference for a governing body to oversee the operation of the directory. The Working Group would also prepare a deployment schedule, including the development of any necessary RFP for hosting and software.

VII. Special Interest Groups: ICT Knowledge Sharing

United Nations Development Group ICT Tasking Group

29. UNDP provided an update to the Network on the recent organizational restructure of the UNDG mechanism, including the change of the standing UNDG ICT Working Group to a more project-oriented UNDG ICT Tasking team. This team would continue to address country-level ICT operational issues, but on an “as-needed” basis. The Chair of the ICT Tasking Team then provided an update on the activities of the prior year, including the development of the common directory project, recommendations for common hardware and desktop standards, increased use of shared support staff within the country offices and an increased harmonization between ICT Working Group and ICT Network. The presentation also noted that the chair of the tasking team rotates through the UNDG Executive Committee organizations and therefore WFP would be assuming that role.
30. In its discussions, the Network agreed that its role should remain at the policy level, while understanding the importance of maintaining a close coordination between the policy discussions of the Network and the country-level ICT coordinating role of the UNDG ICT Tasking Team. The Network also agreed that while it functions primarily as an advisory sub-body to the HLCM, its activities easily cross over into the other two pillars of the CEB structure, the High Level Committee on Programmes and the UNDG. Noting the need for a continuous dialog between the operational activities at the country level and policy decisions at the system-wide level, the Network agreed that one option could be the creation of a special interest group of the Network that has a focus on country-level operations.

SAP Special Interest Group (SAP-SIG)

31. Presenting as the new chair for the SAP Special Interest Group (SAP-SIG), WFP thanked UNICEF for its many years of leading this group and reported on the recently-concluded meeting in Rome that drew 25 participants from 10 organizations, including representatives of HR, finance, budget as well as ICT departments. The discussions at the meeting included the way organizations addressed their ERP management as well as sessions on IPSAS implementation, e-recruitment and travel management. WFP reported that a key discussion topic was an effort to prioritize the areas of opportunities for collaboration across organizations, especially within finance and HR.

Oracle/PeopleSoft Special Interest Group (CABIO)

32. As the current chair of the CABIO group, UNHCR reported that the next meeting was scheduled for August and will be organized by UNDP and ILO. At that time a new Chair for the group will be selected due to the departure of the ICT Head at UNHCR.

VIII. ICT Network Work Plan

33. After a short discussion, the Network concluded that its key workplan agenda would stem from the business practices proposal and agreed to revisit this item at its next meeting.

IX. Other Matters

ICC – ICT Network Coordination

34. The chair of the ICC Management Committee (UNJSPF), along with the CEB Secretariat, informed the Network that the Management Committee of the International Computer Centre (ICC) had discussed principles of coordination between the two bodies intended to improve coordination and streamline administrative activities. During the discussion, many organizations noted the natural linkage between the broad policy mandate of the ICT Network and the implementation mandate of the ICC.
35. The ICT Network thanked the ICC Chairman and the Director of the ICC and agreed that:
 - a. ICC would extend an invitation to participate as observers ICT Network members who are not currently ICC members for a maximum of two meetings.
 - b. ICC will arrange for invitations to be sent to both (ICC Management Committee and ICT Network) meetings, announcing time and location and make available its PartnerNet facility for organizing meeting logistics.
 - c. ICC will cover the costs for meeting facilities and logistics, if required (i.e. if not provided by a hosting organization).

One UN Country Office Domain Name

36. The Chair of the UNDG ICT Working Group presented to the Network the need to identify an organization-neutral domain name that could be used by country Resident Coordinators (RC) for both e-mail as well as web sites. The presentation noted that since the RC represents the UN system in a country, utilizing a specific agency domain, like UNDG, too closely “brands” the position with a specific agency. Various alternatives were discussed (including un.org, un.int, oneun.org and unsystem.org). The Network agreed that a decision on this issue could not be taken without a more detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of any given selection and called upon the CEB Secretariat, working closely with the newly formed UNDG ICT Tasking Group, to more closely explore the merits of each option to be presented at the next meeting for endorsement.

UN Secretariat Information and Communications Technology Strategy

37. The Network received an update from UN Secretariat CITO on the strategy recently submitted to the General Assembly on behalf of the Secretary General. Compiled on the basis of executive interviews and internal ICT surveys undertaken in December 2007, the strategy provides the Secretariat direction and gives clear emphasis to the alignment of Information and communications technology investments with strategic requirements placed on the organization. The accompanying document (Reference: A/62/793), entitled 'Investing in information and communications technology: information and communications strategy for the United Nations Secretariat' would be circulated to the group as a basis for related discussions in the following meeting.

Date and Venue for Next ICT Network Meeting

38. Introducing the discussion of future ICT Network Meeting locations, the CEB Secretariat recalled that the ICC proposed several criteria for the selection of a meeting location, including easy accessibility from headquarters locations and the existence of appropriate facilities for a large group to meet. In addition, the ICC agreed to act as the coordinator for meeting announcements and registrations and would cover the expenses for logistics associated with the joint meetings, if they are not provided by a hosting organization. Furthermore, ICC noted that it would proceed with its own arrangements for meeting venue and date if agreement on these issues could not be resolved between the two bodies.
39. During the discussion, the Network considered several locations for future meetings and agreed to accept the invitation by the IAEA to host the next meeting in October 2008 at its headquarters in Vienna. In addition, the Network agreed that to avoid extended discussions at the next two meetings, the location of these meetings would be discussed at the present time. Following additional discussions, the Network agreed to accept the invitation of the United Nations Secretariat to host the spring 2009 meeting at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) location in Bangkok, Thailand, pending confirmation by that office. This meeting location would allow participants to visit a common out-sourcing location in Chennai, India. UNDP proposed that the fall 2009 meeting takes place in a One-UN country office and that the ICT Network will coordinate with ICC for the fall 2009 location.

Annex I
List of Participants

Organization	Name	Title
	Ms. Susana Malcorra	Chair, ICT Network
UN	Mr. Soon Choi	CITO, Information Technology
	Mr. Eduardo Blinder	Director, Information Technology Services Division
ILO	Mr. Nadim R. Habra	Chief, Information Technology and Communications
FAO	Mr. David Benfield	Director, Information Systems and Technology Division
UNESCO	Mr. Paulo Serra	Director, Information Systems and Telecommunications
ICAO	Mr. Pat O'Hare	Chief, Information and Communication Technology
World Bank	Mr. Omar Baig	Manager, ISG
ITU	Mr. Anders Norsker	Chief, Information Services Departement
WMO	Mr. Miguel Casas-Garate	Acting Chief, Information Technology Division
IMO	Mr. Vincent Job	Deputy Director / Head, Information Technology and Information Systems, Administrative Division
WIPO	Mr. Neil Wilson	Director and CIO, IT Division
IFAD	Mr. Jose Stigliano	Director, ICT Division
IAEA	Mr. Charles Havekost	Director, Division of Information Technology
WTO	Mr. Ghassan Karam	Director, Informatics Division
UNWTO	Ms. Adriana Gaytan	Chief, Information Technology
UNCTAD	Mr. Oluseye Oduyemi	Director, Division of Management
UNDP	Ms. Shirin Hamid	Chief Technology Officer, Bureau of Management
UNHCR	Mr. John Serrato	Director, CIO, Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications
UNRWA	Mr. Suhail Katkhuda	Chief, Information Systems Division
UNICEF	Mr. Stefan Zutt	Director, Information Technology Division
UNFPA	Mr. Rafiodin Malikzay	Chief, Management Information Systems Branch

Organization	Name	Title
WFP	Mr. Ernesto Baca	CIO and Director, Information and Communications Technology Division
CTBTO	Mr. Mensah Solomons	Chief, Network and Systems Support Section
ICC	Mr. Andreas Christoforides	Director, ICC
ICC-CPI	Mr. Ian Blacker	Chief, ICT Section, Information and Communication Technologies
ITC	Mr. Gerry Lynch	
OHCHR	Mr. Christopher O'Connor	Chief, Information Management and Technology
PAHO	Mr. Lorne Murdoch	Head, Information Technology
UNFCCC	Mr. Ibrahim Al-Haifi	Chief of ICT, Information Services
UNJSPF	Mr. Paul Dooley	Chief, Information Management Systems Section
UNOPS	Mr. Karsten Bloch	Chief, Division for Information & Communication Technology
UNDG	Ms. Michelle Maggal	Chief, Enterprise Production Support Services Chair, UNDG ICT Working Group
CEB Secretariat	Mr. Ken Herman	Senior Advisor on Information Management Policy Coordination, CEB Secretariat New York
	Mr. Richard Maciver	UN System Webmaster & ICT Specialist