



TENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the Information and
Communications Technology
Subcommittee**

1. The Information and Communications Technology Subcommittee (ICTS) met on 12 March 2007 for its third session. Mr S. Thom, Chairperson of the ICTS, opened the meeting.
2. The other Subcommittee Officers were: Mr A. Finlay (Employer member), Vice-Chairperson, and Mr S. Nakajima (Worker member), Vice-Chairperson.
3. The Chairperson confirmed that he would act as the Reporter of the Subcommittee. Owing to the fact that the ICTS report had to be submitted for processing on Tuesday, 13 March, the Subcommittee authorized the Chairperson to adopt the report on its behalf.

Information Technology Strategy (2007–09)

4. The Chief of the Information Technology and Communications Bureau (ITCOM) introduced the Information Technology (IT) Strategy paper.¹ He emphasized that the document before the Subcommittee provided details of the Strategy as requested at the November 2006 session, during which the executive summary of the Strategy had been presented. He noted that the Strategy was linked to the Human Resources Strategy (2006–09), the knowledge-sharing strategy being developed, and the ILO's strategic objectives.
5. He noted that, according to the results-based management (RBM) road map adopted by the Governing Body in November 2006,² the first step was to have the IT Strategy for 2007–09 approved. The following IT Strategy would be prepared within the context of the next Strategic Policy Framework and would be fully compliant with the RBM framework.
6. The Chief of ITCOM noted that 12 implementation initiatives had been identified within the three major areas of the Strategy, which were: programme execution services;

¹ GB.298/PFA/ICTS/1.

² GB.297/PFA/1/1.

infrastructure; and governance, support and training. Details of implementation were presented in the paper for each of the 12 initiatives.

7. The Worker Vice-Chairperson expressed appreciation for the work of the Office in preparing such a comprehensive document. He noted elements that were missing from the Strategy, such as the impact of United Nations reform and the relationship between the outcomes and the External Auditor's report. He pointed out that clear budget lines and better forecasting and timelines were needed for implementation initiatives. He sought clarification on the reference to the UN Extranet and suggested that the Office should consider granting Governing Body members access to the ILO Intranet and to certain components of IRIS. He said that the Workers could approve the Strategy, on the understanding that the Office would address a number of additional elements in a revised Strategy paper to be presented in November 2007.
8. The Employer Vice-Chairperson expressed appreciation for both the content and the clarity of the document. He noted that the linking of outcomes, results and outputs was very helpful. He remarked that the paper could be improved, for example by applying metrics to more outputs. He also referred to a report on IT governance (prepared by Satyam Computer Services Limited) which he found to be very useful. He sought clarification of the role of the Subcommittee in relation to IT budgetary matters. In conclusion, he said that it would be useful to revisit the Strategy in two years to take stock of what had been achieved.
9. The representative of the Government of Peru said that the document formed a good basis; however, more work was needed to fully align it with RBM. He raised concerns about the lack of detail on timing, costs and deadlines in implementation. He could approve the Strategy if a revised document were submitted in November addressing the points raised.
10. The representative of the Government of Australia welcomed the progress made on the Strategy document. However, he listed several concerns, which included the need for more details on the governance framework, the importance of involving users in the IT governance framework, the need for explicit linkages to the Human Resources Strategy, UN reform and the field structure review, and the need for more work on the RBM elements. He emphasized that, at the last meeting of the Subcommittee, all constituents had asked for the Office to provide detailed information on the roll-out of IRIS to the field, including timelines and cost. He added that the IT Strategy as it stood did not contain this information. He proposed amending the point for decision to request the Office to take into account the elements raised in the discussion and to submit a revised Strategy document for decision at the November session.
11. The representative of the Government of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, emphasized that all 12 initiatives presented in the Strategy were important. She expressed concern about resources for training and the importance of improving support. She recommended that the PFAC approve the Strategy, bearing in mind the points raised. She requested that the Subcommittee be regularly updated on developments in relation to the implementation of the Strategy.
12. The Chief of ITCOM explained that the Strategy paper was not an operational document but a framework for setting the direction for IT in the ILO. Comments made by the members of the Subcommittee would be taken into account in the implementation of the Strategy. Other issues raised would be addressed in the other two papers, on IRIS and EDMS.
13. The Executive Director of the Management and Administration Sector explained that budget questions would be discussed in the PFAC. She agreed that the impact of UN

reform on the IT Strategy was important and would be reflected in the implementation of the Strategy, and noted that the Office would report to the Subcommittee on the implementation of the Strategy.

14. The representative of the Government of Australia agreed that the Strategy paper was not an operational document but felt that several missing elements still needed to be addressed. His view was supported by the representative of the Government of Peru.
15. The representative of the Government of Nigeria noted that updates to the Subcommittee on the implementation of the Strategy would be very useful. It was not the role of the Subcommittee to impede the work of the Office in implementing the Strategy.
16. The Subcommittee endorsed the point for decision amended to read as follows:

The Subcommittee recommends to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee that it:

approve the IT Strategy as contained in GB.298/PFA/ICTS/1. However, the Subcommittee's recommendation is conditional upon the Office submitting, for decision, an updated IT Strategy to the November 2007 meeting of the Subcommittee, account being taken of the views expressed by the members of the Subcommittee during the March 2007 discussion.

Integrated Resource Information System

17. The Executive Director of the Management and Administration Sector introduced the paper on the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS).³ She indicated that the paper responded to a request made by the Subcommittee in November 2006 to provide details on the benefits of IRIS and on the provision of access to IRIS for ILO external offices.
18. She said that the review of the benefits of IRIS referred to the document on the potential benefits of IRIS presented to the Governing Body in March 2000.⁴
19. The Executive Director summarized the main benefits of IRIS as being in the areas of financial control, improved tools, greater transparency, more reliability and better availability of data. She noted that IRIS had led to added value, particularly in preparing the programme and budget and in terms of potential benefits for future development, including learning, recruitment, competency management and asset management. She added that IRIS would facilitate the introduction of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).
20. She said that there was more work to be done in the realization of benefits, in particular with regard to the use of IRIS as a management tool. However, IRIS had provided noticeable benefits to the Office in streamlining business processes, providing more timely access to data and enhancing transparency and financial controls.
21. In relation to the extension of IRIS to external offices, she noted that some IRIS functionality was already active in the field. The Strategic Management Module (SMM)

³ GB.298/PFA/ICTS/2.

⁴ GB.277/PFA/2/2.

had been used to prepare the programme and budget since 2005, and the Implementation Planning Module had been in use since 2006.

22. The Executive Director pointed out that a cautious approach was being followed in extending IRIS to the field. Activities were being carried out with due consultation, analysis and knowledge of field operations; this was supported by consultation missions to the regions.
23. She said that the first significant extension of IRIS to a field location would be to a technical cooperation project in Jakarta. This was now anticipated for April/May 2007.
24. The Employer Vice-Chairperson thanked the Office for the informative presentation and looked forward to the timetable for the extension of IRIS to the external offices. He suggested that it would be useful, when presenting benefits, to provide some specific examples.
25. The Worker Vice-Chairperson thanked the Office for the paper. In relation to benefits, he noted that, while improvements in data quality were welcome, the comprehensive benefits of IRIS would not be realized until it was in full use by external offices. He further noted that problems in accessing IRIS due to poor connectivity caused frustration for IRIS users in the field. He also raised concerns about remote access to IRIS and asked how data could be protected from unauthorized access.
26. With regard to extending IRIS to external offices, he noted the importance of risk management, taking the implications of UN reform into consideration and assessing the capacities of external offices in relation to their ability to take on IRIS.
27. The representative of the Government of Australia thanked the Office for the useful information on IRIS. He appreciated the articulation of the streamlining of business practices and the information provided on the roll-out of IRIS to the field. He noted that, while most of the initial benefits appeared to have been realized, it would be useful to have information on any benefits that had not yet been achieved, as this would facilitate evaluation of whether IRIS was a success.
28. He noted that due consideration should be given to the field structure review and UN reform in relation to providing additional IRIS access to external offices. He invited the Office to provide information on the risks involved and steps taken to mitigate them. He requested further information on the Jakarta project with regard to risks and risk mitigation, along with an assessment to ensure that any lessons learned could be applied to the remainder of the field.
29. The representative of the Government of Peru noted that the high costs of IRIS were an ongoing concern and that the potential use of IRIS as a management tool would help to mitigate concerns over cost. He supported the view expressed by the representative of the Government of Australia that the report should include areas where benefits had not been realized.
30. The representative of the Government of Nigeria supported the deployment of IRIS in the field and said that it should be done in collaboration with the field structure review and UN reform. She stressed the importance of coordinated training, and questioned whether the budget was sufficient to meet IRIS training needs.
31. The Executive Director reiterated the importance of the field structure review and UN reform in the planned extension of IRIS to the field. She further noted that other UN agencies had already invested heavily in their own enterprise resource planning systems,

which were not always compatible. She emphasized the importance of consultation with the field, and of including staff at all levels in the dialogue. With regard to the training budget, she pointed out that training was the responsibility of the Human Resources Development Department and that sufficient funds had been allocated to address IRIS training needs in 2006–07.

32. The Director of the Bureau of Programming and Management noted that SMM demonstrations had been provided to Subcommittee members in the past and that further demonstrations could be arranged as required.
33. The Chief of ITCOM (the Department responsible for providing IRIS technical support) addressed the security questions. He said that the data existed in one data centre, fully backed up in case recovery was needed, and that IRIS data transmissions were protected by high-grade encryption. Policies were in place requiring users to change their login passwords on a regular basis. For remote access, an extra layer of authentication was being applied and access rights had to be approved by line management and Financial Services; there were also restrictions on the functions that were available remotely. In addition, IRIS transactions were monitored on an ongoing basis to detect any problems.

Electronic Document Management System

34. The Chief of ITCOM briefly introduced the paper on the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)⁵ which provided the additional information requested in November 2006 – namely, more details on subprojects, timelines and budgets. He gave an update on the budget figures and on two subprojects. The search engine for the Web Content Management System (WCMS) subproject had been acquired and was currently being installed and tested. He noted that the ILO public web site would be enhanced to give better searching capabilities and restructured to present ILO information by themes rather than by sectors and departments. He informed the Subcommittee that the circulars application had “gone live” the previous week.
35. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted that EDMS would have a major impact on the Office and would be widely used; consequently, it was important to address such issues as confidentiality, security and staff training both at headquarters and in the field. He said that lessons learned from the IRIS experience would have to be taken into account. With regard to iRecruitment, he said that recruitment and selection should be based on established procedures, in accordance with the collective agreement concluded between the ILO and the ILO Staff Union. He asked for clarification as to whether EDMS training would be covered by the staff development budget.
36. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted the importance of EDMS and the significant impact that it would have on the Office. He said that, from a governance point of view, the report was clear and concise, providing an appropriate level of detail for the Subcommittee.
37. The representative of the Government of Peru noted that the paper indicated that EDMS implementation was going in the right direction and he encouraged the Office to continue the implementation of the project.
38. The representative of the Government of Australia noted that the inclusion in the paper of the subprojects involved, the timelines envisaged and the associated costs was particularly useful. He expressed concern that the actual costs for 2006 did not seem to coincide with

⁵ GB.298/PFA/ICTS/3.

projected costs, and that it was thus difficult to make an assessment of whether EDMS was on schedule or within budget. He was also concerned that the reconciliation of remaining EDMS funds was unclear in the paper.

39. The representative of the Government of Nigeria encouraged the Office to continue the effective implementation of the project.
40. The Chief of ITCOM noted that confidentiality and security were being taken very seriously. He pointed out that an essential element of all external collaboration contracts was knowledge transfer to ILO staff, so as to build up in-house expertise. He also provided additional information on the budget.
41. The Chairperson thanked the participants and closed the third session of the ICTS.

Geneva, 14 March 2007.

Point for decision: Paragraph 16.