



EIGHTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Information and Communications Technology Subcommittee

1. The Information and Communications Technology Subcommittee (ICTS) met on 6 November 2007. Mr Steve Thom, Chairperson of the ICTS, opened the fourth session of the ICTS.
2. The other Subcommittee Officers were: Mr A. Finlay, Employer Vice-Chairperson and Mr S. Nakajima, Worker Vice-Chairperson.
3. Mr Thom confirmed that he would act as the Reporter of the Subcommittee.

Information Technology Strategy (2007–09)

4. The Chairperson noted that the Subcommittee's approval of the Strategy submitted in March 2007 was conditional upon the Office submitting for decision an updated Information Technology (IT) Strategy for the November session. He stated that members had coordinated between sessions and provided tripartite comments and recommendations to the Office to guide the preparation of the updated Strategy document.
5. The Chief of the Information Technology and Communications Bureau (ITCOM) in his introduction of the paper¹ thanked the Subcommittee for their tripartite comments and for providing recommendations to guide the Office.
6. The Chief of ITCOM highlighted new elements in the updated Strategy which included information and communications technology (ICT) governance structures; IT security management; extension of IRIS functionality in the field; an overview of ITCOM 2006–07 expenditures and 2008–09 budget projections; results-based management (RBM) as it applied to IT; and ITCOM's participation in UN reform through the current ICT Network.
7. The Chief of ITCOM indicated that an annual progress report on the IT Strategy would be provided in November 2008.

¹ GB.300/PFA/ICTS/1.

8. The Chairperson invited the members of the Subcommittee to comment and reminded members that the paper was being submitted for decision as referenced in paragraph 45.
9. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted with appreciation the effort made by the Office in clarifying concerns raised during the last session. He stated that the paper would benefit from additional cost-oriented information and requested that the Office provide further information linking the IT Strategy with other Office strategies.
10. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the clarification on policy and governance provided in the paper. He requested clear and broad information going forward in relation to the IRIS upgrade, field connectivity, infrastructure costs and application development outside the Management and Administration Sector (MAS). He supported the ongoing formal process for the review of IT initiatives within the Office. In relation to security, he requested a time frame for the security risk assessment and the formulation of the risk treatment plan and its cost implications, and questioned whether field offices were included in the scope of the risk assessment.
11. The Worker Vice-Chairperson sought clarification on the scope of IT security and, in particular, whether it was limited to system backups and recovery and if the security budget was sufficient to improve the Office's current security level as recommended by the UNICC (UN International Computing Centre). He requested further details on the amount provided for server replacement and queried whether this was to replace all servers.
12. In relation to the IRIS field rollout, the Worker Vice-Chairperson stressed the importance of lessons learned from Jakarta, noted that the field structure review would have an impact on the field rollout, and emphasized the importance of adequate training to address the concerns of staff members. He requested information on the IRIS field rollout beyond June 2008. He requested detailed information on the results of the Jakarta pilot project including the time frame and the cost implications. He noted that the RBM high-level indicators required further refinement to ensure that IT objectives were achieved effectively and economically. On the question of UN reform, he underlined the importance of maintaining the ILO tripartite identity.
13. The Worker Vice-Chairperson proposed adding the following text to the point for decision in paragraph 45: "in the light of the Subcommittee's discussion".
14. The Employer Vice-Chairperson found the paper to be helpful and congratulated the Office on its openness. He requested further information on the Oracle 12 upgrade, the difference between staff improvement and training in the budget, and cost implications of UN-related initiatives.
15. The representative of the Government of Peru noted that substantial progress had been made since the last session. He expressed a concern about processes and procedures running in parallel, notably, the field structure review, the extension of IRIS functionality in the field, integration with ILO programmes and the "One United Nations" initiative. He suggested that the Office reflect on the progress of parallel initiatives to ensure a coherent approach across all processes.
16. The representative of the Government of Australia noted improvements in the paper and welcomed the frank assessments of IRIS rollout to the field in line with the recommendations of the External Auditor. He noted the importance of articulating clear plans, detailed costs and milestones for extending IRIS functionality in the field.
17. The representative of the Government of Australia suggested that it would be preferable to have a single IT Strategy document incorporating the current update, to ensure ease of

reference and better capacity for it to be a “living document”. He reiterated a request to include indicative timing for future IRIS rollout targets. He noted that the 12 IT Strategy initiatives should be linked to the overarching objectives of the Office and requested that the next Strategy be presented as a single document.

18. A member of the Workers’ group posed a number of additional questions. He requested a glossary of acronyms and their definitions to be included in the paper to facilitate understanding, further details on the number of staff working in IT throughout the Office, and clarification on the concept of security. With regard to UN reform, he supported integration of premises and IT systems but emphasized the importance of not diluting the ideals, message and specificity of the ILO.
19. The representative of the Government of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, welcomed the IT Strategy paper, notably, the updated views on governance. He requested clarification on disaster recovery, inclusion of a list of prioritized risks and specific mitigation strategies for the field rollout, and lessons learned from the extension of IRIS functionality in Jakarta and Bangkok. He stressed the importance of a cost-effective network linking headquarters, the field and the UN system.
20. He also requested that the amount budgeted for telephony infrastructure be explained. He requested that the distribution of such funds take care of the African regional field offices which had an infrastructure deficit.
21. The Worker spokesperson and the Government representatives of Australia and Nigeria proposed that an informal session should be held in March 2008 to provide an update on progress.
22. The Chief of ITCOM responded to the questions raised by the Subcommittee members. He indicated that the review of IT initiatives within the MAS was operational, and that the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) was currently reviewing the extension of the process beyond the MAS sector. He clarified that the current budget for server replacement was not sufficient to replace all servers, that it was divided between headquarters and the field, and that servers were normally replaced at the end of their three- to four-year warranty.
23. The Chief of ITCOM explained that the high infrastructure costs included the purchase and installation of hardware and software, software licences, IRIS outsourced infrastructure services, and ongoing maintenance and support of equipment. He noted that the 2006–07 numbers included the replacement costs of the entire headquarters network infrastructure which had become obsolete and was no longer supported by the manufacturer.
24. The Chief of ITCOM explained challenges around connectivity between Geneva and the field. He stated that due to the “dynamic” changes in costs of Internet connections in individual field locations, the question of field office connectivity needed to be handled on a case-by-case basis.
25. A representative from ITCOM provided some background and further clarification on the rationale and costs associated with the Oracle 12 upgrade of IRIS.
26. A member of the Workers’ group reiterated his request for an IT staff headcount and requested the ratio of IRIS training to the overall training costs. He asked that the Office consider establishing a discrete item in the budget dedicated to replacement of IT materials and equipment, as was being done for the renovation of the headquarters building.

27. The Executive Director of MAS indicated that there was an IT fund to assist in covering the costs of upgrading technology. The Chief of ITCOM provided further clarity on the scope of the IT fund, and on the “Part IV” funds in the regular budget.
28. The Chairperson noted the support for an informal briefing in March 2008. He also noted the support for the amendment proposed by the Workers’ group to the point for decision in paragraph 45.

The Subcommittee recommends to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee to approve the updated Strategy, taking into account the discussion of the Subcommittee.

Training for the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS)

29. The Chairperson invited the Chief of the Human Resources Policies and Development Branch (HR/POL) to introduce the paper.²
30. The Chief of HR/POL outlined the current status and progress of IRIS training within the context of the Human Resources Strategy. He noted that responsibility for IRIS training was transferred to the Human Resources Development Department in January 2007 but was coordinated through a training advisory group that included representatives from the IRIS functional, organizational, developmental and change management teams.
31. The Chief of HR/POL outlined the courses and workshops offered in 2005–06, and provided information on the number of users trained and the lessons learned. He stressed the importance of using a variety of teaching methods and media, incorporating rules and procedures of the Office, and building a long-term capacity for providing ongoing training at headquarters and in the field.
32. The Chief of HR/POL gave an overview of training methodologies and the targeted establishment of a pool of 15–20 multilingual “super-users” with knowledge across the full range of IRIS modules. He stated that staff members designated to act as trainers from the regions had been identified and capacity building had commenced. He concluded by summarizing the projected budget for IRIS training in 2006–07, which he put into context against the total amount allocated for all staff development activities throughout the Office.
33. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that the paper was helpful in terms of its layout and expressed general satisfaction with it. He appreciated the governance perspective it provided. He stated that additional budget details would have been beneficial.
34. The Worker Vice-Chairperson raised a concern that the question of providing IRIS training materials in all three ILO official languages was not addressed in the paper. He encouraged the Office to apply lessons learned from Jakarta regarding the more cohesive and integrated curriculum to the pilot programme in Budapest. He concluded his remarks by stressing that IRIS training should not be carried out at the expense of other staff development within the Office.
35. The representative of the Government of Peru noted that staff training was extremely important. He asked how much time and money would be required to train all ILO staff on IRIS.

² GB.300/PFA/ICTS/2.

36. The representative of the Government of Nigeria, representing the Africa group, welcomed the positive steps outlined in the document and stressed the need for a continuous three-pronged approach to training encompassing learning, training and knowledge-sharing, including networking.
37. The Chief of HR/POL confirmed that the current pool of trainers was multilingual and some training courses at headquarters were currently being held in both English and French. He indicated that translation of materials in the future would depend on the timing of extending IRIS functionality in the field and the Oracle 12 upgrade. Continuous training would be required while IRIS and associated staff roles evolved over time. He added that the cost of training was being reviewed in the light of the field rollout plan and the capacity of the Office.

Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)

38. The Chief of ITCOM introduced the EDMS paper³ and provided updates on the subprojects.
39. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted that the paper was helpful in outlining the current status of EDMS initiatives. He emphasized the importance of EDMS and the profound impact it would have on ways of working and on staff, imposing much more discipline on how information was processed. He expressed the need to address training and associated work processes in a timely manner in headquarters and the field. He recommended involvement of the users during the planning, testing and training phases of the implementation. He urged the Office to consider distributing Governing Body official documents to Governing Body members at least 15 days before Governing Body sessions.
40. The Chairperson thanked the participants and noted that he would approach the Office to arrange for an informal session of the ICTS during the next Governing Body in March 2008. Following this, the Chairperson closed the fourth session of the ICTS.

Geneva, 7 November 2007.

Submitted for information.

³ GB.300/PFA/ICTS/3.