

**1999/58. The need to harmonize and improve United Nations informatics systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Aware of the interest of Member States in taking full advantage of information and communications technologies for the acceleration of economic and social development,*

*Recalling its resolutions 1991/70 of 26 July 1991, 1992/60 of 31 July 1992, 1993/56 of 29 July 1993, 1994/46 of 29 July 1994, 1995/61 of 28 July 1995, 1996/35 of 25 July 1996, 1997/1 of 18 July 1997 and 1998/29 of 29 July 1998 on the need to harmonize and improve United Nations information systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States, with due regard to all official languages,*

*Welcoming the report presented by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics on the progress achieved so far in fulfilling the mandate of the Working Group,<sup>162</sup>*

1. *Reiterates once again the high priority that it attaches to easy, economical, uncomplicated and unhindered access for States Members of the United Nations, observers and non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations to the computerized databases and information systems and services of the United Nations, provided that the unhindered access of non-governmental organizations shall not prejudice the access of Member States and that it shall not impose an additional financial burden for the use of databases and other systems;*

2. *Requests the President of the Economic and Social Council to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to carry out its work from within existing resources, for the due fulfilment of the provisions of Council resolutions on this item, for facilitating the successful implementation of the initiatives being taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the use of information technology and for continuing the implementation of measures required to achieve its objectives, through, *inter alia*, the continuation of the following activities:*

(a) *Improving electronic connectivity via the Internet for all Member States in their capitals and at major United Nations locations, *inter alia*, through the enhanced connectivity of permanent missions to the Internet and the United Nations databases;*

(b) *Intensifying efforts to provide electronic connectivity to those Member States that do not currently have this service;*

(c) *Improving the access of Member States to a wider range of United Nations information on economic and social issues, development, political issues and other substantive programming areas, and having all official documents available via the Internet;*

(d) *Improving electronic mail links between Member States and the United Nations, the specialized agencies and each other;*

(e) *Providing specialized training for the staff of missions to enable them to take advantage of the facilities being developed for Member States, in particular electronic mail and Internet web pages;*

(f) *Enhancing the capacity of Member States to access United Nations data online, using low-cost telecommunications links or providing other modalities, for example, CD-ROM, whereby Member States can have access to specialized databases not available on the Internet;*

(g) *Making arrangements, as appropriate, to provide permanent missions of developing countries with the hardware platform to utilize Internet technology;*

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<sup>162</sup> See E/1999/SR.36/Add.1. For the final text, see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Plenary Meetings, 36th meeting.*

(h) Intensifying the use of videoconferencing to further communication and interaction between the United Nations permanent missions and academic institutions;

(i) Addressing the year 2000 problem (the so-called "millennium bug") within the Secretariat and ensuring that remedial action is being taken, as appropriate, and that contingency plans are being developed;

(j) Building awareness of the year 2000 problem among Member States and, if necessary, providing a platform for Governments to address the issue at the global and regional levels;

(k) Promoting the active support of relevant international organizations for national efforts to deal with emergency situations which may arise from disruptions related to the year 2000, in particular in the aviation, telecommunications, maritime and health sectors;

(l) Encouraging greater information-sharing on year 2000 preparedness in order to help countries and organizations to take the necessary remedial actions and contingency planning and to share detailed year 2000 readiness information with the public;

(m) Broadening access to information about the United Nations at the country level, especially in developing countries;

(n) Developing an information management strategy;

3. *Commends* the Working Group for the success of the two global meetings of national year 2000 coordinators, held at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 1998 and on 22 June 1999, which respectively raised the awareness of Member States, especially the developing countries, of the gravity of the year 2000 problem, reviewed the state of preparedness of Member States for meeting the challenge of the problem and enabled them to share experiences on remedial action and contingency planning;

4. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America for the financial assistance they provided for the organization of the meetings and the participation of national coordinators;

5. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts made to bring the Economic and Social Council in line with new information technologies, through a more user-friendly Council web page and the broadcasting on the Internet of the work of the high-level segment of the current substantive session;

6. *Reaffirms* the continuing need for representatives of States to be consulted closely and associated actively with the respective executive and governing bodies of United Nations institutions dealing with informatics within the United Nations system, so that specific needs of States as end-users can be given priority;

7. *Urges* the Working Group to intensify its contacts with the private sector so as to bring its wealth of expertise and experience to bear on the work of the Group;

8. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Information Systems Users' Group in Geneva to ensure connectivity to all Geneva-

based permanent missions, and notes with appreciation that extensive work has been done, with the assistance of the various United Nations agencies, in particular the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the United Nations Office at Geneva, to provide training and equipment to permanent missions in Geneva;

9. *Expresses its gratitude* to the International Telecommunication Union and private sector sponsors for the contribution they have made to the Geneva Diplomatic Community Network, and hopes that this project will be extended to all permanent missions and to those of developing countries on concessional terms;

10. *Suggests* that one possibility for the theme of its high-level segment in 2001 could be "Information and communications technology for social and economic development" in order to underscore the importance of modern information technology for the development activities of the United Nations and the need for international cooperation in this field;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to extend full cooperation to the Working Group and to give priority to implementing its recommendations;

12. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its substantive session of 2000 on the follow-up action taken on the present resolution, including the findings of the Working Group.

*46th plenary meeting  
30 July 1999*