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Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme

Second Meeting of the Bureau

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Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CREATION OF
NATIONAL CO-ORDINATION FRAMEWORKS OR MECHANISMS
FOR THE INFORMATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME**

Summary

The Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme, at its first session, requested the Bureau to establish guidelines for the creation of national co-ordination frameworks or mechanisms for the Information for All Programme, in co-operation with the Secretariat, and to present them to the Council at its second session.

The present document presents proposals for an IFAP approach to national coordination and on the characteristics and responsibilities of possible IFAP National Committees.

Decision required: paragraph 21

A. National coordination frameworks under PGI and IIP

1. Both predecessor intergovernmental programmes of IFAP encouraged the establishment of national coordination frameworks. Under the General Information Programme (PGI), Member States were invited to nominate both focal points and National Committees while for the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP), only nominations for focal points were officially registered although it was foreseen that they might take the form of National Committees.

2. At the time of the merger of the two programmes in January 2001, 124 Member States and one Associate Member had nominated national coordination frameworks for one or both programmes: 89 Member States and one Associate Member having nominated an IIP focal point and 86 Member States having nominated a PGI focal point and/or national committee (see Annex 1).

3. Member States nominated national coordination frameworks from a wide diversity of national institutions, although two-thirds of them were established within either a ministry or other government agency responsible for coordinating national activities or a major operational agency in information or informatics. Table 1 shows the distribution of these entities by institutional framework.

Institutional framework	IIP FP (1)	PGI FP	PGI NC (2)	Total
Ministry	33	27	21	81
Operational agency	21	32	13	66
Research	10	13	7	30
UNESCO Natcom	11	5	5	21
Higher education	12	1	0	13
Commercial enterprise	2	0	0	2
NGO	1	0	0	1
Total	90	78	46	214

Table 1. IIP and PGI national entities by institutional framework, (1) FP:Focal point, (2)NC: National Committee

4. It is of interest that only three Member States (Ghana, Mongolia, Philippines) have nominated the same organization as both IIP and PGI coordination entity.

5. The roles and characteristics of the national coordination frameworks for both former programmes are reviewed in the following sections. Other intergovernmental programmes of UNESCO also have national coordinating frameworks which would be useful to consider in the context of the present document. The selection criteria and terms of reference for three of these programmes Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), International Hydrological Programme (IHP) are described in Annex 2. It should be noted that i) their coordinating entities have generally been assigned more specific functions and responsibilities than those of IIP and PGI, and ii) these programmes differ from IFAP in their major orientation towards scientific research.

a) PGI focal points and National Committees

6. In July 1973, after the creation of the UNISIST Programme (Intergovernmental Programme for Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technological Information), the Director-General invited Member States to establish national focal points for science information and UNISIST national committees. Focal points were specifically seen as governmental or government-chartered agencies with policy and planning responsibilities in the overall area of scientific and technological information. It was envisaged, however, that focal points could also have operational functions, either on principle or because there was no other suitable location for them. The Director-General's letter gave detailed guidance on how a national focal point could be organized and function in different national situations.

7. As opposed to the focal point whose essential functions were at the national level, the same circular letter defined the broad function of the UNISIST National Committee as advising the national focal point and other cooperating organizations on all aspects of participation in UNISIST. Detailed guidelines were given for this work at the levels of both policy (participation in UNISIST conferences and in the work of the UNISIST Steering Committee) and action (monitoring progress of the Programme, participating in programme initiatives and taking national initiatives as specific contributions to UNISIST). Again in contrast to the national focal point, the UNISIST National Committee was expected to ensure the appropriate representation of civil society elements, notably of the scientific community.

8. Within the UNISIST Programme, the focal points and National Committees were generally active and involved, notably in the organization of regional information policy meetings and in the preparation and testing of guidelines and standards. Often the person responsible for the IIP focal point or national committee served on the UNISIST Steering Committee when his/her Member State was elected to this body.

9. When PGI was created in 1976 by merging UNISIST with the much larger UNESCO programme for documentation, libraries and archives (DBA), the objectives and organizational framework were taken as they were supposed to cover all areas of specialized information. Member States were invited to reorganize their focal points and National Committees to cover all of the areas of competence of PGI. This was mainly effected by enlarging the representation in National Committees, and in some cases by naming an appropriate ministry or a national library or archives as focal point to replace a scientific and technological information centre. Perhaps because the new mandate of the PGI national coordination entities was not sufficiently clearly defined in the expanded programme, and perhaps due to inadequate organization of the UNESCO secretariat to meet the new communication needs, involvement of and communication with these coordination entities gradually decreased and effectively ceased in the early 1990's. An indication of this trend is the fact that none of the newly independent countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia nominated PGI coordination entities, while five named IIP focal points.

b) IIP focal points

10. After the establishment of IIP in 1985, Member States were invited to nominate IIP focal points whose principal responsibility was to facilitate contacts between the Programme and national institutions and bodies, particularly during the identification and inception stages of projects. Specifically, this responsibility involved channelling inputs from or contributions to the Programme, ensuring a consistent approach to the various activities in the country concerned, and disseminating information and publication related to the IIP.

11. In each country, it was foreseen that a focal point could be:

- an established national advisory board or committee on informatics;
- a department or an office within a Ministry;
- a specialized group within a science and technology body of a national scope; or
- a specialized committee within the National Commission for UNESCO.

12. The focal points for the Regional Informatics Network for Africa (RINAF) should be added to the IIP focal points. RINAF was launched in 1992 as a regional IIP framework for African cooperation in the area of telematics. 16 of the 43 RINAF members did not nominate IIP focal points but participated in IIP through their national RINAF focal points.

13. Contacts with IIP focal points were continued on an *ad hoc* basis up until the discontinuation of IIP as a separate programme. From the point of view of the UNESCO secretariat, the IIP focal points were generally seen to provide effective technical support for the formulation of IIP projects, often working in close consultation with UNESCO National Commissions. Often the persons responsible for the IIP focal points were chosen by Member States to serve on the IIP Intergovernmental Committee, providing continuity between national action and international strategy.

B. The IFAP approach to national coordination

14. There are clearly advantages for an intergovernmental programme such as IFAP to set up a national coordination framework to facilitate and promote its work. In considering the appropriate modality to be adopted by IFAP, the following elements are proposed:

- The establishment of national focal points along the lines previously proposed by UNISIST and PGI, but extended to coordinate all information society policy issues, would not be a feasible endeavour in the short term for most Member States, particularly the developing countries; such mechanisms where they exist could rather be shared as examples within IFAP with a view to stimulating debate on and development in this area.
- The IIP focal points and PGI National Committees shared similarities with the ongoing national committees of MOST, MAB and IHP; they could serve as models for IFAP National Committees.
- IFAP National Committees should bring together all concerned stakeholders, including government, civil society and the private sector, according to a clearly defined mandate.
- For a national coordination framework to be effective, specific responsibilities should be agreed in terms of information flow between national coordination entities and UNESCO, the expected contributions of the national coordination entities to IFAP, and the support function of UNESCO *vis-à-vis* these entities.
- Many UNESCO National Commissions already have committees dealing with communication and information. The added value of an IFAP National Committee would include: i) concentration on information society issues, ii) mandate and resources to contribute more substantively to IFAP, and iii) regular informal as well as formal consultation with the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat and with other IFAP National Committees.

15. The following sections make proposals for the consideration of the Bureau on the characteristics and responsibilities of an IFAP National Committee:

a) Structure and location

16. The IFAP National Committee should include representatives of all major national stakeholder groups in the information society including ministries; parliamentary committees; libraries and archives; informatics, telematics and telecommunication infrastructure and service providers; education and training institutions in the areas of information science and informatics; users of information and Information and Communication Technology services in education, science, culture and communication; producers of digital content; local communities and civil society. The secretariat for IFAP National Committee could be established, for example:

- within a national advisory board or committee on the information society, information resource development, or ICTs;
- within a concerned ministry or government agency;
- as a specialized committee of the National Commission for UNESCO.

b) Functions and responsibilities

17. The IFAP National Committee should, in co-operation with the UNESCO National Commission:

- i. identify and motivate national institutions concerned with the various objectives and activities of IFAP;
- ii. constitute a permanent forum to facilitate the flow of information between UNESCO/IFAP and interested national institutions;
- iii. regularly disseminate information about IFAP objectives and activities provided by the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat, including a national IFAP website;
- iv. organise periodic national IFAP meetings and prepare an annual report on national activities to be addressed to the UNESCO/IFAP secretariat for publication by UNESCO and consideration by the IFAP Intergovernmental Council;
- v. facilitate appropriate national inputs to and participation in, as a member or as an observer, the sessions of the IFAP Intergovernmental Council, and IFAP related international and regional meetings;
- vi. advise on and organize expert assistance on the planning, implementation and evaluation of IFAP projects
- vii. assist in obtaining funding for national participation in IFAP projects.
- viii. identify and formulate project proposals for consideration for funding through the IFAP Special Account.
- ix. maintain contacts with other IFAP National Committees on questions of mutual interest.

18. The IFAP National Committee should have Statutes which clearly define its membership, mandate and procedures.

c) Funding

19. The IFAP National Committee should have a budget to fund its own functioning (meetings of its members, co-ordination of IFAP at the national level, publication of information), as well as, whenever possible, to provide seed money for national IFAP activities and national participation in regional and international IFAP meetings. Any of

several methods of financing could be considered depending on national circumstances, alone or in combination, for example:

- a central government allocation
- allocations from concerned ministries and public agencies (including, in industrialized countries, the agency responsible for international development assistance)
- contributions of institutions represented on the National Committee (taking care that this does not exclude any relevant actors with limited resources)
- participation fees for national IFAP activities (again being careful not to beget exclusion)
- voluntary sponsorship, including of the private sector

20. At the international level, the active contribution of IFAP National Committees could in the medium term substantially increase both the quality and efficiency of the Programme, including the possibility of cost savings due to devolution of certain activities and responsibilities. On the other hand, the effective support for a system of National Committees would require the specific allocation or re-allocation of resources in the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat, notably in terms of material and human resources for communication with the Committees.

21. The Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme,

1. Having examined document IFAP-2002/Bureau.II/5 "Guidelines for the creation of national co-ordination frameworks or mechanisms for the Information for All Programme";
2. Endorses the proposals for an IFAP approach to national coordination and the characteristics and responsibilities of possible IFAP National Committees;
3. Requests the Secretariat to seek the opinion of former PGI and IIP national coordination entities on the opportunity of creating IFAP National Committees and report thereon to the Council at its 2nd session;
4. Requests the Secretariat to submit the "*Guidelines for the creation of national co-ordination frameworks or mechanisms for the Information for All Programme*" including the results of the above consultation to the Council at its 2nd session for endorsement.

Annex 1**IIP and PGI national coordination entities**

Country	IIP	PGI FP	PGI NC
Afghanistan	x		
Albania	x		
Argentina	x		
Armenia	x		
Australia	x	x	
Austria	x	x	
Azerbaijan	x		
Bahrain	x		
Bangladesh		x	x
Barbados	x	x	
Belarus	x		
Belgium	x	x	
Belize	x		
Benin	x	x	x
Bolivia	x	x	x
Botswana	x		
Brazil	x	x	x
Bulgaria		x	x
Burkina Faso	x		
Burundi	x	x	
Cameroon	x		
Canada		x	
Cape Verde		x	
Central African Republic	x		
Chad	x		
Chile	x	x	x
China		x	
Colombia	x	x	
Congo	x		
Costa Rica	x	x	
Côte d'Ivoire	x		x
Cuba	x	x	
Cyprus	x	x	
Czech Rep.	x	x	x
Denmark	x	x	
Dominica		x	
DPR Korea	x		
Egypt		x	x
El Salvador	x		
Equatorial Guinea	x		
Finland		x	x
France	x	x	x
Gabon	x	x	
Germany	x	x	x

Ghana	x	x	x
Greece		x	x
Grenada	x	x	
Guatemala	x		
Guinea	x	x	x
Guyana		x	
Haiti	x		
Honduras	x		
Hungary	x	x	x
Iceland		x	x
India		x	x
Indonesia	x	x	x
Iran	x	x	x
Iraq		x	
Ireland	x	x	
Israel		x	
Italy	x	x	x
Jamaica	x	x	x
Japan			x
Jordan	x		
Kenya	x	x	x
Lebanon		x	
Lesotho	x		
Lithuania	x		
Luxembourg	x		
Madagascar	x	x	
Malawi	x	x	x
Mali	x		
Malta		x	
Mauritius	x		
Mexico	x	x	
Moldova	x		
Mongolia	x	x	
Morocco		x	x
Nepal			x
Netherlands	x	x	x
New Zealand	x		x
Nicaragua	x		
Niger	x		
Nigeria	x	x	x
Norway	x	x	
Pakistan	x	x	x
Panama	x		
Papua New Guinea		x	
Peru	x		x
Philippines	x	x	x
Poland		x	x
Portugal	x	x	
Qatar		x	

Republic of Korea		x	x
Romania	x	x	
Russia		x	x
Rwanda	x	x	x
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	x		
Saudi Arabia		x	
Senegal	x	x	x
Seychelles	x		
Slovenia	x		
Spain	x		x
Sri Lanka		x	x
Sudan		x	
Suriname	x		
Swaziland	x		
Sweden		x	x
Switzerland	x		x
Syria	x	x	
Thailand		x	x
Togo	x		
Tunisia		x	x
Turkey	x	x	
Ukraine		x	
United Arab Emirates	x	x	
United Republic of Tanzania		x	
Uruguay		x	
Venezuela	x	x	
Vietnam		x	x
Yemen	x		
Yugoslavia			x
Zambia	x	x	
Zimbabwe	x		
Netherlands Antilles	x		

National coordinating frameworks of other UNESCO intergovernmental programmes

a) MOST

1. The Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme encourages Member States to establish National Liaison Committees (NLCs) to spur co-operation among researchers, decision-makers and the Programme Secretariat. Member States are free to establish the structure and composition of a MOST NLC according to their own priorities. Liaison Committees are generally constituted with the support of UNESCO National Commissions, but any institution with responsibility for scientific policy, such as a national research council, may host a liaison committee. The composition of NLCs may include social science researchers based in universities or other research institutions and representatives of bodies co-ordinating research funding and of research-user groups such as governments, the private sector, trade unions, professional associations, NGOs or community based organisations.

22. The NLCs have a responsibility to:

- identify and motivate national institutions concerned with social science research related to the principle thematic interests of the MOST Programme;
- regularly disseminate information about MOST Programme activities sent by the MOST Secretariat to National Commissions;
- constitute a permanent forum to facilitate the flow of information between UNESCO-MOST and interested national institutions;
- assist the constitution of national research networks;
- assist in obtaining funding for groups participating in MOST projects from national bodies such as national research councils, or appropriate government Ministries.

b) MAB

23. The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme has interdisciplinary (including natural and social scientists) National Committees which are responsible for the national contribution to the Programme. They are composed of representatives of the main national scientific research centres in MAB's domains of competence, and of the concerned universities, institutions and ministries. A MAB National Committee should:

- in co-operation with the UNESCO National Commission, serve as a liaison between the different institutions and ministries concerned by the MAB Programme and UNESCO;
- liaise with the national structures responsible for the other UNESCO programmes in environment and development, i.e. the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP), International Hydrological Programme (IHP), Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission (IOC) and Management of Social Transformations (MOST) with a view to developing joint activities, as appropriate;
- ensure the national participation, as a member or as an observer, whenever appropriate, in the sessions of the MAB International Co-ordinating Council.

24. The MAB National Committee should be in a position to:

- whenever possible, have a budget to provide seed money to national MAB activities and funds for its functioning (meetings of its members, co-ordination at the national level of its biosphere reserves; participation in regional and international meetings, publication of research results and diffusion of information);
- organise periodic meetings and prepare a report on national activities to be addressed to the MAB Secretariat at least every two years;
- ensure exchanges of information and expertise and the development of communication systems and databases, including updating of the MABnet and if possible the creation and maintenance of a national MAB web site;
- ensure, whenever possible, participation in regional networks and in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

c) IHP

25. The International Hydrological Programme (IHP) invites Member States to set up IHP National Committees, whose roles differ from country to country and depend on the national capabilities and the existing institutional structure for hydrological studies and water resources management. The National Committees are invited to present written reports on their activities in the framework of the IHP. These National Reports are submitted to the IHP Intergovernmental Council and cover the activities for the period between Council sessions. The Council has recently initiated a discussion on updating the mandate and functioning of the National Committees.

26. Where no IHP National Committee has been established, a Focal Point or National Correspondent in the form of an organization or individual has been identified for channelling information about IHP to and from the country.