UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme

Second meeting of the Bureau

UNESCO House, Paris, Room XIV (Bonvin Building), 2-3 September 2002

Item **6** of the provisional agenda

Guidelines for Virtual Meetings of the IFAP Council and its Bureau

SUMMARY

The Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme, at its first session, requested the Bureau to develop guidelines for virtual meetings and consultations.

The present document that was prepared by Mr Carlos Eduardo Balen y Valenzuela, Member of the Bureau (Colombia) proposes a set of conditions and criteria for examination by the Bureau with a view to its submission to the Council for adoption. Annex I that was prepared by the Secretariat outlines elements of technical solutions.

Decision proposed: paragraph 20.

A. Framework for the Information for All Programme – IFAP

1. The Information for All Programme – IFAP provides a platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action on:

– preservation of information and universal access to it;

– participation of all in the emerging global information society;

– ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICT developments.

2. The Information for All Programme provides a framework for international cooperation and international and regional partnerships. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society, and for narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

3. The Information for All Programme is a key element in the fulfilment of UNESCO's mandate to contribute to "Education for All" and the "free exchange of ideas and knowledge", and to "increase the means of communication between peoples".

4. The Statutes of the Council stipulate that the Council shall meet in regular session at least once and no more than twice every two years; and also that during the first three years of existence of the Information for All Programme, the Council should meet annually. This requires mechanisms for the holding of virtual meetings, with the active participation of the members of the Council and the Bureau, as a direct means of sharing relevant practices, learning from the experiences of all participants and furthering the discussion, preparation and approval of the key themes contained in the Information for All Programme.

5. At its first meeting, held in Paris in April 2002, the Intergovernmental Council requested the Bureau to establish a procedure for the holding of virtual meetings within the scope of the Information for All Programme – IFAP. The idea is to establish a coordination mechanism under the Programme for the meetings of the Council and its Bureau. This document proposes a Virtual Forum in response to the wish of the Council, establishes the objectives of the Forum and describes its possible operation for the approval of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme.

B. Objectives of the Virtual Forum

– Create a scenario of virtual meetings for the Council and Bureau members;

– Encourage the participation of the Member States in the Programme;

– Invite debate and comments on the themes of the Programme;

– Serve as a Forum for the adoption of new practices;

– Strengthen the action of members with a view to implementing IFAP recommendations;

- Intensify cooperation between the IFAP Council and the Councils of other International Programmes of UNESCO;

- Reduce communication and transport costs;

- Reinforce the internationalization tendency.

C.   Rules of Procedure for virtual meetings through the Virtual Forum – IFAP

6.   <u>Principles governing the organization of the forums</u>

- UNESCO shall provide the infrastructure of the Virtual Forum as a space within which the organizations and authorities of the Member States of UNESCO can discuss and approve the themes of the IFAP programme, in lieu of meetings requiring physical attendance.

- he Intergovernmental Council shall monitor the operation of the Forum during its regular and extraordinary sessions.

- The Chairperson, assisted by the moderators of the Virtual Forum, shall be responsible for coordinating the debates of each virtual meeting.

- The virtual meetings shall be private and, given that the participants will not have to take part at the same times, will not be online.

- The Secretariat shall provide safeguarded technical resources for the organization of the virtual meetings, including individual user identification codes and passwords for members.

- The Council shall establish the discussion groups to participate in the virtual meetings.

7.   <u>The organizers of the Virtual Forum</u>

The Bureau shall be responsible for electing the moderators of the Forum. A moderator shall be designated for each discussion theme and discussion group.

The Secretariat of the Council shall be responsible for convening the virtual meetings.

8.   <u>Participants</u>

The participants in the Virtual Forum shall be all those members of the Intergovernmental Council and the Bureau, and all persons designated for the purpose by the members, and who shall in any event, preferably be specialists in the fields of activity of IFAP.

9.   <u>Observers</u>

As in the case of meetings requiring physical attendance, the Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO which are not Council members may assign observers to the virtual meetings of the Council and its discussion groups, with the exception of Bureau meetings.

Participants in the virtual meetings of the Council and its discussion groups, except for meetings of the Bureau, may also include the representatives of the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, without the right to vote. The Council shall lay down the conditions under which other governmental and non-governmental organizations may be invited to the virtual meetings.

10.   Sessions of the meetings

The virtual sessions of the Council and the Bureau shall be held with the same frequency as that prescribed in the Statutes for meetings requiring physical attendance. Documents should be available in the Forum sufficiently early for the analysis and discussion of the themes in order to ensure that, in conformity with the date fixed for the virtual meeting, the relevant voting can subsequently take place. In any case, the analysis and study of the themes should begin no later than one month before the virtual meetings in which the respective decision on the themes on the agenda are to be taken.

11.   Duration

The Forum meetings shall last as long as the moderator for each theme deems necessary in the light of the matter to be discussed.

12.   Choice and organization of the discussion themes

The preparation of the provisional agenda and themes to be discussed at the Council meetings shall be the responsibility of the Council's Secretariat, in consultation with the members of the Bureau.

The provisional agenda shall be communicated to the members of the Council no later than two months before the opening of the virtual meeting.

The agenda shall comprise questions whose inclusion has been agreed by the Council; the questions proposed by the Member States of the Council; the questions proposed by the organizations of the United Nations system with which UNESCO has entered into agreements of reciprocal representation; and the questions proposed by the Director-General of UNESCO.

The agenda shall be approved by the Council at the beginning of the virtual meeting. Changes, deletions and the inclusion of additional items shall be effected according to the procedures established in the Statutes.

13.   Participation procedures

The Chairperson shall declare the opening and closing of each of the plenary meetings, direct and coordinate the debates on the different themes through the moderators, ensure observance of the Rules of Procedure, put questions to the vote and announce decisions.

The moderator shall guide and provide documents for the meeting, stimulate discussion and make changes to the published draft, as follows:

• Each moderator should send an initial message in order to launch the theme among the Forum's users. The moderator shall publish the documents to be discussed.

- Each participant shall be given an alias and a password with which to access the Forum. The participants can thus go to the meeting-place at their convenience, make their contributions to the discussion, and gain access to fresh contributions and comments made by the other participants. In this way, each participant may read new messages and add more comments and documents.

- The moderator shall assemble the comments, ensure their translation, through the Secretariat, if necessary, and have them published in the Forum. The moderator shall, subsequently, be responsible for making alterations to the drafts in the light of the comments received from the participants and, finally, for publishing the amended draft.

The procedure for these debates is different from that used for debates requiring physical attendance. Since the participants in the Virtual Forums meet at different times, more time should be allowed for participation, statements, observations and voting than in the case of meetings requiring physical attendance. The Bureau shall determine the time that each theme should remain online for the aforementioned activities.

Once the themes have been debated and analysed, and the drafts amended, they will be submitted for a decision of the Council in its final virtual voting meeting, in which the Council shall take decisions on the relevant agenda item.

14. Languages of the Forum

The participants shall be invited to use Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. However, the Council may limit the number of working languages for a given meeting if this does not impair the efficient conduct of the meeting.

Any speaker may, in any given meeting of the Council or a special committee, use a language other than the working languages in normal use, subject to making provision for the interpretation of the speech into one of those working languages.

15. Quorum

The quorum shall consist of a majority of the Member States of the Council registering for the Forum, with their respective aliases and passwords, by the date set by the Bureau.

The quorum for meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Council shall consist of a majority of the Member States of the Council which are members of the body concerned.

16. Voting

Voting requirements shall be the same as those laid down in the Rules of Procedure for meetings requiring physical attendance.

17. Financing

The operating costs of the Forum shall be covered by an appropriation made for the purpose by the General Conference of UNESCO.[1]

---

[1] As in the case of the Intergovernmental Council.

The Member States shall bear the expenses of the participation of their representatives in the virtual meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

18.   Secretariat

The Director-General of UNESCO shall make available to the Council the services of the Secretariat, with the staff and other resources required for its operation; set the dates of the meetings in accordance with the Bureau's instructions and with the Rules of Procedure of the Council, and assemble all suggestions and comments made by Member States of UNESCO and the international organizations concerned, with regard to IFAP as a whole, and the formulation of specific projects to be submitted to the Council for examination.

19.   Reports

The Director-General shall submit to the Council, at each of its sessions, a report on the operation of the Virtual Forum-IFAP.

The Director-General shall submit to the General Conference, at each of its meetings, a report on the operation of the Forum and its achievements, particularly as it relates to the activities of other UNESCO programmes, and those of other bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

20.   The Intergovernmental Council of the Information for All Programme may wish to approve the following resolution:

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

1.   Having studied document IFAP-2002/Bureau.II/6 "Guidelines for Virtual Meetings of the IFAP Council and its Bureau",

2.   Approves the proposal to establish a Virtual Forum-IFAP serving as a platform for the organization of virtual meetings of the IFAP Council and its Bureau;

3.   Requests the Secretariat to submit the "Guidelines for Virtual Meetings of the IFAP Council and its Bureau" to the second session of the Council for discussion and approval.

Annex I

Elements for technological solutions

A.   Introduction

1. The Information for All Programme is an intergovernmental programme, which implies that both the Council and the Bureau are of the category II of the UNESCO classification in its rules and regulations. This implies, in particular specific tasks schedule for the preparation of meetings of: the Council and the Bureau and different categories of documents (Working documents, Information Documents, Reports)

Languages

2. The official languages of the Council are English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish and Russian, in which languages all working documents and simultaneous translation are provided. For Bureau meetings, working languages are English, French and Spanish.

Different types of virtual meetings

- Based on synchronous communications

    o video-conference
    o visio-conference
    o audio-conference

- Based on asynchronous communications

    o www work-espace
    o discussion groups
    o mailing list

Evaluation

VIDEO AND AUDIO CONFERENCE

- Present Composition of IFAP Council and its Bureau and time lag

    o   Council Composition

GMT Reference (summer time)

Member State	Time lag	Member State	Time lag	Member State	Time lag
Bahrain	+3	France	+2	Peru	-5
Belarus	+2	Germany	+2	Philippines	+8
Benin	+1	India	+6	Russian Federation	+4
Brazil	-5	Iraq	+3	Slovakia	+2

Cameroon	+1	Japan	+9	Spain	+1
Canada	-4	Madagascar	+3	Sweden	+2
China	+8	Mauritania	0	United Republic of Tanzania	+3
Colombia	-5	New Zealand	+12	Zimbabwe	+2
Cuba	-4	Nigeria	+1		

o   Bureau Composition

GMT Reference (summer time)

Membre State	Time lag
Canada	-4
Nigeria	+1
Iraq	+3
Slovakia	+2
Colombia	-5
China	+8
New Zealand	+12

- Time lag matrix between Member States represented in the IFAP Bureau

Member State	Canada	Nigeria	Iraq	Slovakia	Colombia	China	New Zealand
Canada	0	5	7	6	1	12	4
Nigeria	5	0	2	1	6	7	11
Iraq	7	2	0	1	8	5	9
Slovakia	6	1	1	0	7	6	10
Colombia	1	6	8	7	0	1	5
China	12	7	5	6	1	0	4
New Zealand	4	11	9	10	5	4	0

- Video-conference

  o   Equipment

    - Equipment in each sites;
    - Local operation and maintenance team;

  o   Changes in the composition of the Council and the Bureau: every two years, which implies to reorganize the video-conference network every two years too.

- Audio-conference

  o   Equipment
    - Equipment in each sites;
    - Telephone operator.
- Costs

  o   Average cost per site of

    - Video-conference equipment and installation: US$ 25,000
    - Audio-conference equipment and installation: US$ 2,500

o   Average hourly telecommunication costs (To be checked)

Member State	Video Conference (US$/h)	Audio-Conference (US$/h)	Member State	Video Conference (US$/h)	Audio-Conference (US$/h)
Bahrain	403,20	67.20	Japan	176,40	29.40
Belarus	316,80	52.80	Madagascar	360,00	60.00
Benin	360,00	60.00	Mauritania	360,00	60.00
Brazil	295,20	49.20	New Zealand	176,40	29.40
Cameroon	360,00	60.00	Nigeria	410,40	68.40
Canada	82,80	13.80	Peru	403,20	67.20
China	360,00	60	Philippines	295,20	49.20
Colombia	295,20	49.20	Russian Federation	176,40	29.40
Cuba	403,20	67.20	Slovakia	158,40	26.40
France	32,76	5.46	Spain	82,80	13.80
Germany	82,80	13.80	Sweden	90,00	15.00
India	403,20	67.20	United Republic of Tanzania	507,60	84.60
Iraq	507,60	84.60	Zimbabwe	507,60	84.60

One hour audio-conference average costs can be estimated to US$ 1,267.86 and one video-conference average cost to US$ 7,607.16.

3. One day audio-conference average cost is estimated to US$ 7,607.16 and one day video-conference to US$ 45,642.96.

4. It should be noted that a number of countries are not accessible for video-conferencing.

WWW WORK-SPACE

5. Web based work-space systems accessible 24h per day, 7 days per week, providing a centralized information system and services preventing users from document version discrepancies, with possibilities of mirror sites as backup and making access easier.

- Main characteristics

    o   main features:
    - document and issue management ;
    - discussions and news;
    - task scheduling & management;
    - contact directory;
    - multilayer security management.

    o   users :
    - Council members;
    - Bureau members;
    - IFAP Secretariat.

    o   administered by
    - the Bureau Rapporteur;
    - editor in chief from the IFAP Secretariat;

    o   technical operation & support
    - hosting site: UNESCO web site;

- UNESCO technical team.