UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/CP.TEIA/2008/7
9 September 2008

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY
EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Fifth meeting
Geneva, 25–27 November 2008
Item 9 (a) of the provisional agenda

UNECE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Report on implementing the decision increasing the effectiveness of and enhancing the communication procedure within the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System

Note by the secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. At its fourth meeting (Rome, 15–17 November 2006), the Conference of the Parties took decision 2006/3 on increasing the effectiveness of and enhancing the communication procedure within the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System. This decision aimed in particular (a) to enhance the current communication procedure of the IAN System by introducing Web-based notification, while keeping fax notification as a back-up procedure, and (b) to maintain the current requirements of the IAN System and to implement the prototype of a simple Web-based notification application, developed jointly by UNECE and the Joint United Nations Environment Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit, to improve communication between points of contact. The Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to outsource the task of making the prototype a working application, preferably by the end of 2007, and to report back on the process (ECE/CP.TEIA/15/Add.1, decision 2006/3, para. 7).

2. This document contains the report on how the application was developed and released for use by points of contact within the IAN System.

I. PREPARATORY PROCESS

3. The preparatory process started with the goal of releasing a fully operational Web-based application, developed from the existing prototype, with development costs of under €35,000. The concept for the application, prepared by the secretariat, foresaw development of the application by an information technology (IT) consultant, hired by the secretariat and working under the supervision of: (a) a steering group consisting of representatives of points of contact with the role of overseeing the project, deciding on different functionalities and user requirements and testing the application before release; and (b) the UNECE Information Systems Unit, which would oversee the technical part of the project. Coordination of the project would be undertaken by the secretariat.

4. This concept was presented to the Bureau and accepted at its tenth meeting (Geneva, 15–16 February 2007). The secretariat subsequently took steps to find an experienced and knowledgeable IT consultant, to establish a steering group and to start the project implementation.

A. Selection of the information technology consultant

5. The IT consultant was selected through interviews of a group of candidates who had applied for the consultancy described in the assignment's terms of reference prepared jointly by the secretariat and the UNECE Information Systems Unit. The terms of reference required applicants to be able to deliver: (a) an operational Web-based application to be installed in the UNECE Web infrastructure; (b) technical documentation; (c) a user manual; and (d) training of representatives of points of contact on the application's use.

6. During the selection process, it turned out to be quite difficult to find an appropriate candidate with both the requisite knowledge of applications development using an object-oriented programming language and the relevant planning and organizational experience, especially in conducting training sessions. It was therefore decided, in consultation with the Bureau, to spend more time finding a consultant meeting all the specified requirements, and thus to move the start of project implementation from May to October 2007.

7. Subsequently, the secretariat, together with UNECE Information Systems Unit, interviewed Mr. Joseph Buangan. Mr. Buangan proved to have the requisite knowledge and experience, and was selected for the assignment.

B. Steering group

8. In parallel with the consultant selection process, the secretariat took steps to establish the steering group. To this end, points of contact were contacted by the secretariat at the end of February 2007 and briefed on (a) the process to develop the Web-based notification application;

and (b) the expected tasks for the steering group. They were invited to nominate representatives having the adequate experience and knowledge to support this undertaking.

9. Points of contact from Italy, Romania, Switzerland and the European Commission responded to the secretariat's invitation by nominating representatives to the steering group.

II. DEVELOPMENT PERIOD, TESTING AND TRAINING

10. The starting point for application development was a steering group meeting on 8 October 2007 in Geneva, attended by Mr. Giorgio Alocci and Ms. Natalia Restuccia (Italy), Mr. Francisc Senzaconi (Romania), Mr. Dominique Rauber (Switzerland), Mr. Fesil Mushtaq (European Commission Joint Research Centre), Mr. Buangan, Mr. Hakan Volkan (UNECE Information Systems Unit) and the Convention secretariat.

11. The meeting looked into the existing prototype, in particular its proposed user functionalities, and discussed how these and other functionalities could be adopted in the final application. The functionalities discussed and agreed upon referred to: (a) the method of notification; (b) the use of languages; (c) the system use; (d) the steps in notification; and (e) the completion of reports. A detailed description of the agreed functionalities for the final application's version is contained in the minutes of the steering group meeting of 8 October 2007.

12. The development process to release the test version of the application took three months. During this period, the IT consultant regularly informed the steering group on the project's progress, e.g. the design, navigation between forms and configuration specifications from the UNECE Information Systems Unit.

13. Following the release of the test version, steering group members and the secretariat were provided with test accounts. While testing, they were asked to complete and send to each other the notification reports and to look for errors and malfunctioning of the application.

14. The test period started at the end of January and continued until mid-March. During this test period, feedback and guidance regarding further improvements were sent to the IT consultant, who made the recommended modifications.

15. The fully operational application was presented to the representatives of points of contact at their Third consultation (Sibiu, Romania, 1–3 April 2008). During an interactive presentation, the IT consultant showed participants how to (a) access the application; (b) use the navigation menu, including access to exercise mode; as well as (c) take advantage of the user-friendly functions facilitating completion of all notification reports. This was followed by a presentation of the user manual and a hands-on training session for representatives of points of contact. The IT consultant was available during the training to provide assistance and answer questions.

16. Participants at the Third consultation agreed to introduce a self-training period up to 1 June 2008, during which the representatives of points of contact would become more acquainted with the Web-based application and train their colleagues on its use.

17. The secretariat informed points of contact [1] whose representatives could not attend in the Sibiu meeting about the self-training period. Several took advantage by requesting training accounts.

III. RELEASE OF THE WEB-BASED APPLICATION

18. The Web-based application was released for official use in the last week of July 2008. Beforehand, points of contact were invited by the secretariat to register their official accounts. An invitation was sent out at the end of May and resent several times in June and July[2]. Nevertheless, a number of points of contact have yet to register.[3] The secretariat will therefore continue its communication to points of contact informing them about users' registration status.

19. It is foreseen that once all points of contact have official accounts, a communications test will be announced and conducted to verify that each point of contact is accessible through the application. Thereafter, points of contact will be invited to perform, in accordance with the agreed recommendations, unannounced communications tests to check on each other's response capabilities.

20. Simultaneously, the UNECE Information Systems Unit was completing its work on moving the Web-based application from an http to an https server in response to the request made by certain points of contact.

IV. COSTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

21. The costs of the development process for the Web-based application comprised only the remuneration of the IT consultant and his travel and accommodation. The former came to US$ 19,000 for delivering the operational application, user manual and technical documentation, and $1,000 for successfully conducting the training session for points of contact on the application's use. The costs of travel and stay in Sibiu accounted for approximately $1,400[4].

22. The steering group's time and expertise overseeing the development process and their participation in the 8 October 2007 meeting in Geneva were provided in-kind by respective points of contact organizations from Italy, Romania, Switzerland and the European Commission.

---

[1] An e-mail was sent a week after the Third consultation. It explained, inter alia, the self-training period and the use of a training account and how to request one.

[2] The reminder messages sent to points of contact in June and July contained registration status, i.e. specification of which countries had registered and which still needed to do so.

[3] As of the date this document was finalized, points of contact from the following countries had not yet registered: Estonia, Greece, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Several other countries (Belgium, Finland, Hungary and Norway) had notified the secretariat that their registration would be delayed due to internal issues.

[4] The mentioned amounts do not include the UNECE 13 per cent overhead costs.

V. SUMMARY

23. Decision 2006/3, to introduce a Web-based application for notification within the IAN System with efficient use of financial resources, has been successfully implemented. This was possible due to the professionalism brought to the project by both the IT consultant and the members of the steering group.

24. It is expected that the release of the Web-based application will lead to easier and more frequent testing of the IAN System, thus further increasing the System's effectiveness. In the future, the use of Web-based application should in particular facilitate better notification during the comprehensive analytical exercises, which were recognized as also important for testing the cooperation between points of contact (see the report of the Third consultation, ECE/CP.TEIA/SEM.6/2008/2).
