OPCW

Seventy-Eighth Session
17 – 20 March 2015

NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

STATUS REPORT ON THE VERIFICATION INFORMATION SYSTEM

Introduction

1.   The Verification Information System (VIS) is the information system that has been developed by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") to manage all verification-related information and to support its verification activities.

2.   The concept for the development of the VIS was presented by the Director-General in a Note to the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Fortieth Session (EC-40/S/2, dated 27 January 2005). Further Notes from the Director-General to the Council at its Forty-Second (EC-42/S/3, dated 2 September 2005), Fifty-First (EC-51/S/2, dated 20 November 2007), Fifty-Fifth (EC-55/S/3, dated 30 January 2009), Fifty-Ninth (EC-59/S/3, dated 1 February 2010), Sixty-Third (EC-63/S/4, dated 20 January 2011), Sixty-Seventh (EC-67/S/2, dated 25 January 2012), Seventy-First (EC-71/S/1, dated 16 January 2013), and Seventy-Fifth (EC-75/S/4, dated 15 January 2014) Sessions provided updates on the status of the development of the VIS.

Status of the Verification Information System

3.   As the key business-enabling technology platform supporting verification activities, the VIS is continually being improved to streamline and support verification business processes and to increase the Secretariat's analytical capabilities.

4.   In 2014, the Secretariat continued to improve the VIS, with a particular focus on implementing changes required for the plant site selection methodology. These changes mainly included the consideration of mixed plant sites in the selection process (in accordance with the Note by the Secretariat S/1202/2014, dated 23 July 2014) and changes to the weights of product group codes in the A15 algorithm based on the revised codes contained in the Declarations Handbook 2013.

5.   Also in 2014, the Secretariat increased its efforts to identify areas for potential improvements in the area of document and records management by conducting an initial analysis of the current VIS modules and related information systems, with a view to replacing those systems with an integrated, contemporary enterprise content management solution. A dedicated project is planned to be initiated in 2015 to address this particular area of improvement.

Electronic declarations

6.   In 2014, the Secretariat observed that States Parties demonstrated a continued interest in the submission of declarations in electronic format, with five new States Parties using the electronic declarations tool for National Authorities (EDNA) for the first time to prepare their annual declarations, leading to 43 States Parties currently using EDNA.   Furthermore, upon the release of the new version of EDNA (3.0) in January 2014, which contained a new module dedicated to the declaration of Schedule 1 facilities and activities, the Secretariat also observed significant interest amongst States Parties with declarable Schedule 1 activities, with nine States Parties already submitting their Schedule 1 declarations in electronic format, eight of which used the new module in EDNA.

7.   The project team tasked with overseeing EDNA has continued to work on further improvements to this software tool based on requests received from States Parties during previous user-group forums (S/882/2010, dated 1 November 2010), regional workshops, and training sessions.   Past improvements have also been reported by the Director-General to the Council (EC-70/DG.18, dated 25 September 2012).   As a result of these efforts, the Secretariat plans to release an updated version of the tool in January 2015, with a view to addressing reported software errors and including the most relevant updates to the tool, such as support for the revised product group codes and the synchronisation of the chemicals list with the latest version of the Handbook on Chemicals.

8.   In 2014, the Secretariat continued to work towards the establishment of a secure electronic transmission system, through the secure information exchange (SIX) project.   As a result, the system has been put in place and was made available to States Parties in July 2014 (as reported in the Secretariat's Note S/1192/2014, dated 1 July 2014).   The main objective of this project was to establish a secure electronic channel for the exchange of information, including that of a classified nature, between States Parties and the Secretariat.   In its first phase, the system is intended primarily for the transmission of declarations and declaration-related documents. Following the release of the system to the States Parties, the Secretariat has observed increasing interest amongst States Parties in the system.   Sixteen users from nine States Parties have already registered for the system and a number of other States Parties have expressed an interest in using the system in the near future.   The establishment of the new system has already proved beneficial.   The Secretariat has received the first declarations and declaration amendments through SIX and has also exchanged certain declaration-related documents with the States Parties that are using the system, resulting in a significant increase in the efficiency of information transmission and processing.

9.   Further to the efforts to broaden the usage of existing tools and systems and to promote the new systems that were introduced in 2014, the Secretariat has also focused on the provision of training material related to these tools and systems. For instance, a comprehensive set of user documentation for the SIX system was made available in all official languages and the user documentation for EDNA has also been updated.   Moreover, the Secretariat has been working on the development of e-learning modules for self- and distance learning. As a result, the Secretariat plans to make dedicated e-learning modules for EDNA and SIX available to States Parties in early 2015. This will complement regular training activities organised throughout the

year and provide an additional means for States Parties to acquire knowledge on the electronic tools and systems.

Further information

10. The Secretariat considers the VIS to be an established system. It is in routine use and the main development activities have been completed. As a key enterprise software application that supports all verification activities, the VIS will continue to be subject to continual improvement, with maintenance and enhancement activities carried out as subprojects. In the future, the Secretariat will continue to report only on key developments, such as new releases of EDNA software, developments with regard to electronic declarations and secure information exchange, and reports of the user-group forums.

11. Information on the VIS, EDNA, and SIX can also be found on the OPCW external server, and will be updated as new information becomes available. Questions about the VIS or EDNA can also be sent to a dedicated e-mail address (vis@opcw.org); questions concerning SIX can be sent to the e-mail address six@opcw.org. Interested States Parties can also make enquiries by ringing the OPCW central telephone number (+31 (0)70 416 3000) and asking for the EDNA or SIX help desk.

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