



Verification Division
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**REPORT OF THE FOURTH USER-GROUP FORUM FOR THE ELECTRONIC
DECLARATION TOOL FOR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES (EDNA)**

Introduction

1. Since its creation, the electronic declaration tool for National Authorities (EDNA) has become the most commonly used tool for the preparation of annual declarations of anticipated activities (ADAAs) and annual declarations of past activities (ADPAs) in electronic format and its coverage has been extended to all aspects of Article VI declarations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”).
2. The recent annual round of declarations has been completed, and States Parties have demonstrated to the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) their continued interest in using EDNA to prepare and submit their electronic declarations. In addition, more than 70% of States Parties using EDNA have already upgraded to the latest version, EDNA 2.5, which was released in November 2012. Moreover, States Parties are enthusiastic in requesting further enhancements to EDNA software and the provision of additional functionalities to facilitate them in the preparation and submission of declarations.
3. In order to improve support for EDNA users, to assess what functionalities need to be improved in future releases, to facilitate planning of training activities, and to provide States Parties with an opportunity to share their own experiences in the domain of electronic declarations, the Secretariat organised the fourth EDNA user-group forum during the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held from 27 to 30 November 2013.
4. The agenda included updates from the Secretariat on topics related to electronic declarations and the status of the EDNA project, as well as information on the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) project.

Report

5. The pre-release of the new version of the EDNA application (version 3.0) was presented to the participants and key features were highlighted, especially those related to the new module for declaring Schedule 1 facilities and activities. States Parties were also informed about issues identified in the current version (EDNA 2.5) that have been fixed in this next release.



6. The States Parties expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Secretariat to improve the EDNA application and welcomed the development of the new module for Schedule 1 declarations, as well as corrections and enhancements included in the new version, all of which were of added value to them when using the software.
7. The second part of the user-group forum was dedicated to the SIX project. States Parties were informed about the background of the project and about its current status and future plans. The presentation was followed by a demonstration of the SIX system, showing how it could be used for the secure digital transmission of electronic declarations and related documents.
8. The Secretariat also informed the States Parties about the pilot programme run prior to the user-group forum in order to test the main technical components of the system that are being developed under the SIX project and to verify suitability of such a system to address the needs of the States Parties. Ten States Parties participated in this pilot exercise, with 70% of participants successfully finishing all steps in the pilot.
9. States Parties' representatives expressed their appreciation for the presentations and status reports, as well as for the demonstration of the system, and congratulated the Secretariat on this initiative. The representatives of several States Parties also conveyed an expectation that the scope of the project would be extended beyond the submission of declaration data and, in particular, to secure communication between States Parties for the purpose of resolving transfer discrepancies and addressing other matters related to the implementation of the Convention.
10. In addition, several States Parties that took part in the pilot shared their own experience from this exercise. Representatives of Argentina, Bulgaria, India, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reported on their experience, highlighted some of the recommendations for future work on this project, and praised the Secretariat for all its efforts, in particular for the clear instructions and professional and timely support offered to the pilot participants.
11. With regard to training related to EDNA and SIX, the Secretariat clarified the fact that, due to time and logistical constraints, it was not possible to organise training sessions during the forum. On the other hand, participants were encouraged to take part in the dedicated training sessions that would be organised during the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter "the Conference") in the following week. This, in combination with the e-learning modules that the Secretariat is planning to develop in 2014, should provide a solid basis for States Parties that are new users or current users that are interested in refreshing their knowledge of these systems.
12. In their closing remarks, the participants in the forum thanked the Secretariat for developing EDNA and for its efforts to improve this software tool, as well as for taking the initiative to develop a system for the secure exchange of information, under the SIX project. They were keen to see further improvements that would facilitate the process of preparing electronic declarations and the secure exchange of information using electronic tools and systems.

Conclusion

13. The fourth EDNA user-group forum has clearly contributed to maintaining the momentum around electronic declarations by encouraging States Parties to submit their declarations using electronic declaration tools and by new initiatives to make use of contemporary information technology tools and systems, such as the secure exchange of information by digital means. In addition, the forum contributed to forging closer links with the user community, as demonstrated by the interactive discussions that took place during and after the forum.
14. The representatives of States Parties expressed their appreciation for the organisation of the fourth EDNA user-group forum within the programme of the Annual Meeting of National Authorities. They also enquired about the possibility for training on EDNA and other relevant training courses to be given in the same week as the Annual Meeting of National Authorities, instead of in the week of the regular session of the Conference, during which most of the representatives from the National Authorities are not present. The Secretariat will further explore the possibilities for addressing this request with relevant OPCW units.
15. Further questions or comments concerning EDNA and SIX can be sent to the following:

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