



Verification Division
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NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT**REPORT OF THE SECOND USER-GROUP FORUM FOR THE
ELECTRONIC DECLARATION TOOL FOR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES (EDNA)****Introduction**

1. The first version of the electronic declaration tool for National Authorities (EDNA), which enables National Authorities to create and submit Article VI declarations in electronic format, was released in November 2008. Following the initial release of EDNA, the first user-group forum was held on 27 May 2009.
2. The release of EDNA version 2.0 at the end of 2009 introduced a significant number of additional capabilities, the most important of which was the capability of the software tool to handle not only the declaration of other chemical production facilities (OCPFs), but also the declaration of Schedule 2 and 3 facilities. In addition, the module for the declaration of aggregate national data (AND) was expanded with an option for the automated aggregation of the chemicals information declared for Schedule 2 and 3 facilities.
3. The recently completed round of annual declarations of past activities (ADPAs) for 2009 already indicates that States Parties are making increasing use of EDNA for making electronic declarations. In addition, numerous States Parties that have not used EDNA for their declarations in the past have expressed interest in doing so for the next round of declarations.
4. Having reached this important milestone, the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) decided to organise a second forum for EDNA users in order to assess the current status of the use of the tool and to understand the needs of the user community with respect to the improvements that could be made in the future to the potential functionality of the tool, and to the provision of support and training by the Secretariat.
5. The second user-group forum for EDNA was held at OPCW Headquarters on 1 July 2010. Twenty-six representatives from eighteen States Parties attended, some of whom travelled to The Hague specifically for this event. Participants expressed their appreciation to the Secretariat for having developed EDNA and were keen to see further improvements that would facilitate the task of preparing declarations.
6. It is clear that EDNA is becoming a key business tool in the declarations process for a growing number of States Parties. The Secretariat is of the view that the continuous improvement of EDNA and the provision of support for its use are key activities that



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7. In preparation for the forum, a survey (in questionnaire form) was conducted to identify areas for the forum to focus on, and also to give those States Parties that were not able to attend the opportunity to voice their views. The questionnaire was sent out to the EDNA-user community via email and fax on 26 May 2010.
8. The objectives of the forum were the assessment of the current status of the use of EDNA, dissemination of the results of the EDNA survey, discussions on EDNA-related issues, and the provision of feedback on new application features requested by States Parties and on training and support issues.
9. The agenda was divided into three parts: the opening of the session and introductory remarks; presentations on the analysis of the results of the EDNA survey; and a round-table discussion moderated by the Chairperson.
10. The opening presentation described the evolution of EDNA software, the current list of capabilities it provides, and the benefits of the use of this tool by States Parties making electronic declarations. A comparative analysis of electronic declarations that had been received by the Secretariat for ADPA 2008 and ADPA 2009, as detailed in S/849/2010, dated 4 June 2010, was provided.
11. The second part involved a presentation of the results of the analysis of the EDNA survey, and provided an introduction to the round-table discussion that followed. The survey assessed the current status of uptake by States Parties of EDNA and identified areas where improvements to the tool have been requested by the user community; in addition, it brought to light areas where further support and training are needed.
12. Thirty-three States Parties responded to the questionnaire, which, along with the feedback from the internal stakeholders, greatly facilitated discussions during the forum. Overall, there were two key trends revealed by the analysis of the survey results: Firstly, there is a growing interest in EDNA and in electronic declarations. Secondly, the user community acknowledged the benefits of the tool in terms of the capabilities it offers. There is, however, a demand for more functionality—such as a streamlined and more accurate declaration process and the possibility of States Parties using EDNA as a tool to manage their entire data set (including enhanced analytical capabilities and greater assistance with declaration data gathering from scattered information sources within the State Party). The responses provided valuable feedback that will guide improvements to EDNA in future releases and establish an efficient platform for future forum discussions.
13. It was made clear during discussions on the details of the analysis that any desirable application features considered by the forum would not translate directly into commitments by the Secretariat to undertake any changes, given that further analysis is needed on the topics that were raised.
14. The findings of the survey were grouped into two categories: application-related feedback and feedback concerning support and training issues. The brief summaries

of each of these aspects (see paragraphs 15 – 18 and 19 below, respectively) also reflect the input gathered during the discussions.

15. Secure electronic transmission of declarations is one of the features mentioned by several States Parties. During the forum, examples of electronic submissions were given by representatives of both the European Union and industry. In response, the Secretariat highlighted the security concerns regarding transmission of declarations over the internet and indicated that a thorough analysis of this topic would be required.
16. Inclusion in EDNA of a module enabling the declaration of Schedule 1 facilities was another common request. Several States Parties were interested in this feature, even though some have their own tools for this purpose. It will be necessary for the EDNA Project Team to perform an in-depth analysis of this requirement, as the differences in declaration requirements when compared to Schedule 2 and 3 facilities mean that a Schedule 1 module may look and feel different to existing modules.
17. Increased analytical capabilities and user-interface improvements were frequently given as desirable features, because they would improve the accuracy of declarations and lead to a better quality of data maintained in EDNA. A rich set of built-in reports and the capability to generate custom reports using data queries with different filters and sorting options would help all States Parties, especially those submitting lengthy declarations. Validation checks for data, improved user-friendly warning and error messages, and comparative reports with respect to previous years' declarations would significantly improve the accuracy of declarations. Improvements in the usability of certain features, such as enhanced printing or sorting capabilities, would save States Parties time during the preparation and review of the declarations prior to submission. A more user-friendly interface would also reduce the time needed to train new users. These observations coincide with the analysis that is ongoing in relation to the next release of EDNA, the development of which will focus on improving reporting and usability features.
18. A version of EDNA suited to distributed use has been requested by some States Parties, which have different institutions or regional offices that need to harmonise their data in order to compile a single declaration.
19. With regard to training and support, the user community expressed satisfaction with the response from the Secretariat. However, a request has been made for the Secretariat to organise training, especially prior to future rounds of declarations. The Secretariat will continue to organise regular training sessions around annual meetings of National Authorities, and will also arrange training upon request; in addition, it will continue to provide training during bilateral visits or at regional meetings and/or workshops. The provision of information on EDNA and on electronic declarations will be a regular feature for events organised by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division and the Implementation Support Branch. Regional seminars specifically focusing on EDNA are planned for the regions of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe between October 2010 and June 2011.

Other activities

20. A demonstration of how EDNA works, for users who might be unfamiliar with all the features of this software tool, took place on 2 July 2010. The same presentation

included a question-and-answer session for more experienced users. A total of eight participants attended this session.

21. Following the forum, members of the EDNA project team individually met with several representatives from States Parties to discuss their feedback with more specificity.
22. The forum also emphasised the importance of the upgrade to EDNA version 2.1, which was explained in more detail. Installation compact discs (CDs) were distributed to the participants, and specific issues related to the upgrade were resolved for two States Parties.

Conclusion

23. The meeting of the second user-group forum for EDNA has clearly contributed to the maintenance of a closer link of the Secretariat with the user community; this was evident in the interactive discussions that took place during and after the forum. EDNA is becoming a key business tool in the declarations process for a growing number of States Parties, and it is important that continued support and development be provided in the long term. Future user-group forums will follow the same successful format (advance questionnaire, presentations, structured round-table discussions, and opportunities for bilateral discussions).
24. Further analyses of the feedback received during forum meetings and through the survey will be carried out, so that the feasibility of enhancements can be assessed and further improvements to EDNA can be taken forward.
25. Several States Parties expressed interest in being involved in pilot testing for future releases. This is of mutual benefit to the user community and to the Secretariat. States Parties also requested that they be involved in more detailed discussions about requirements, particularly in regard to Schedule 1 declarations, reporting capabilities, and usability features. The Secretariat will engage with States Parties in the testing of future releases and in defining the specifics of the additional features that could be added.
26. In response to some of the questions received during the forum, an EDNA "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) document has been published on the OPCW extranet, and addresses some of the issues related to the EDNA version 2.1 upgrade and to the backing up of the EDNA database. The EDNA page on the OPCW internet site will also be updated to reflect the latest information available. The OPCW extranet site will continue to be used as a key means of communication with the user community.
27. Further questions or comments can be addressed as follows:

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