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STATUS REPORT ON THE WIPONET PROJECT

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Background

1. In March 1998, the Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) approved the establishment of a Global Information Network (WIPONET). The aim of this Project was to provide the necessary infrastructure and services in order to improve exchange of information among the global intellectual property community (see document A/32/4, Annex I). Following the approval and under the oversight of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT), the International Bureau developed a deployment strategy and a Project implementation plan, which were approved by the SCIT at its fifth Plenary Session in July 2000 (see document SCIT/5/4).

2. The deployment strategy for WIPONET was based on six basic principles:

(a) The establishment of the technical and human resources infrastructure for the Project's initial and subsequent phases;

(b) Initial connectivity for those Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs) of WIPO Member States with no Internet access;

(c) Ensuring that the Project provides for an equitable level of access for all Member States, and is sustainable by focusing on justified requirements;

(d) Maintenance of a high quality of service;

(e) An emphasis on the training of IPO staff; and

(f) Adoption of a phased approach for the implementation of the project.

3. The deployment strategy also included the following main deliverables for the WIPONET Project:

(a) WIPONET CENTER – The installation and operation of a computer facility that provides a number of services and a platform to host data and run Intellectual Property-specific applications.

(b) WIPONET KIT – The provision and installation of computer equipment together with Internet connectivity, maintenance and Helpdesk support to IPOs, which were not already connected to the Internet.

(c) Training – The provision of training to IPO staff.

4. In implementing the project, WIPO initiated an extensive Request for Proposals (RFP) process and selected a consortium formed by two leading international companies (IBM and SITA). Negotiations with the consortium started in July 2000. Following detailed negotiations and elaboration on the technical details, service level agreements and costs to be included in the contract, a decision was taken, with the mutual consent of all parties, to split the consortium. This enabled WIPO to conclude separate contracts with IBM and SITA for the implementation of the WIPONET CENTER in Geneva and the training of Focal Points in each IPO (IBM) and the deployment of equipment and provision of interconnectivity (SITA). The costs indicated by the two companies, covering the completion of deployment of the network and associated running costs were within budget estimates for the period 2000-2003.

Project Milestones and Achievements

5. Following successful implementation of the Project and in accordance with the Project Life Cycle methodology presented to the SCIT at its fifth Plenary session in July 2000, significant milestones were achieved and are reported as follows:

(a) The WIPONET CENTER, located at WIPO headquarters, became fully operational on November 1, 2001;

(b) Operation of WIPONET started on January 1, 2004, and has been fully integrated into the services environment provided by the Information Technology Program of WIPO;

(c) At the time of the preparation of this document, deployment at more than 95 IPOs had been completed. Deployment at IPOs which have expressed an interest in receiving the WIPONET KIT up to December 31, 2003, is planned to be completed by March 31, 2004; and

(d) Focal Points from those IPOs which received the WIPONET KIT were also trained on the use of the WIPONET KIT equipment and software. In all, approximately 260 Focal Points and other officials from 222 IPOs have been trained to use WIPONET.

6. The completion of the above milestones indicates that the expected results of the WIPONET, as set out in various SCIT documents and WIPO Program and Budget for 2002-2003 (see document WO/PBC/4/2 sub-program 15.3), have been achieved. The completion of the Project has provided Internet connectivity, enabling the access to specific WIPONET services and other WIPO programs such as Distance Learning, etc. It also helped capacity building at a local level through a train-the-trainer approach in IPOs.

7. The subsequent transfer of the WIPONET into a production environment has two major benefits. On a technical level, it has allowed the International Bureau to fully integrate the WIPONET into its existing information technology architecture and operations, resulting in the rationalization of resources (human and equipment) as well as knowledge-sharing of new WIPONET technologies within the entire WIPO IT Program. At a business level, the handing over of the network could be regarded as having transferred true ownership of WIPONET to Member States, in which users could build upon at a local level and utilize as they see fit.

The IPO Experience

8. Apart from the use of the Basic Services such as web site hosting (used by IPOs in Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Niger) and mirroring (Egyptian Patent Office), one of the first expected uses of WIPONET in assisting the automation of an IPO business process will integrate the WIPONET KITS in the internal infrastructure of IPOs, thus, securing access to the regional IP database of the member countries of the *Organisation africaine de la propriété intellectuelle* (OAPI).

9. With pilot tests, expected to start during the first half of 2004, between the Industrial Property Office in Gabon and OAPI in Cameroon, WIPONET will enable IPOs of OAPI member countries to query OAPI's database for the status and follow-up of their IP applications.

Analysis of Project Implementation and Future Direction

10. In preparing for the transition into the operational phase, WIPO undertook a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Project including a reassessment of the requirements for the operational phase. Within the mandate of the basic principles underlying the Project (see paragraph 2, above) the analysis was tasked with: the review and re-alignment of the WIPONET infrastructure and services with the business requirements; technical and administrative adjustments to enable WIPONET to respond more quickly to evolving needs; and the rationalization and reduction of operating costs including the handing over of the ownership of WIPONET to individual IPOs. The analysis focused on critical success factors with regard to the project methodology, project delivery, network

sustainability, lessons learned and the performance of the WIPO contractors as well as the assistance and services provided to the IPOs. Consolidation of the achievements and building long-term sustainability of WIPONET were key drivers behind any future strategy for WIPONET.

11. On the basis of the completed analysis, certain changes have been introduced that involve the insourcing of WIPONET operations and the handing over of the responsibility for the WIPONET KIT to the IPOs:

(a) Insourcing of the WIPONET CENTER – The work related to the operation and future development of the WIPONET CENTER will be insourced from April 1, 2004. In achieving this task in a cost-effective manner, WIPO has sought to utilize the services of the United Nations International Computing Center (UNICC) whereby the UNICC will assist in areas where WIPO does not have in-house expertise, such as in the field of Lotus Domino. Some essential elements of WIPONET, such as the Virtual Private Network (VPN) security, file transfer services (FTP), etc., will continue to be maintained by WIPO. It is believed that such a technical infrastructure will be sufficient to maintain the “high quality of service” required in paragraph 2(d).

(b) WIPONET KIT responsibility – Following a transition of one year, WIPO proposes to hand over the entire responsibility of the WIPONET KIT to the IP Offices, in order to conclude its goal of providing IPOs with a minimum, basic level of Internet access, the necessary hardware, software and training to operate such systems. As indicated in paragraph 2(c) those IPOs that continue to require assistance will be supported through WIPO’s Nationally and Regionally Focused Action Plans (NFAP/RFAP) and the work of the IP Office Automation (IPOA) program.

12. The results of the Project analysis also indicate that the usage of the WIPONET Helpdesk and maintenance facilities by the IPOs is very low, and that, when set against the high costs incurred by WIPO in keeping these services available through the global contractor, the cost of the service was disproportionately high. Accordingly, the following changes have been introduced concerning the level of assistance to be provided to IPOs:

(a) Effective January 1, 2004, the Helpdesk support to the IPOs was insourced and integrated with WIPO’s existing internal Helpdesk;

(b) WIPO will continue to provide Internet connectivity to IPOs, which have received the WIPONET KIT up to December 31, 2004. During 2004, WIPO will assist these IPOs in migrating their Internet connectivity from the WIPONET global contractor to local Internet Service Providers (ISPs), where available. Since the start of the WIPONET Project five years ago, significant progress has taken place in the provision of Internet services across the world, with local ISPs being able to provide faster connections at lower costs. This migration is intended to prepare for the eventual taking over of the WIPONET KIT responsibility by the IPOs (see paragraph 11(b), above);

(c) Effective January 1, 2004, responsibility for maintenance and software upgrades for the WIPONET KIT was handed over to those IPOs, which have received the WIPONET KIT, thereby allowing them to use the WIPONET KIT for their internal IT requirements. WIPO will continue to provide assistance, on a case-by case basis, as part of the IPOA program that has automation consultants based in the regions.

13. Finally, improvements in the services provided by the WIPONET CENTER will continue to be one of the key tasks during the operational phase. IPOs should be reassured that, as business needs evolve, necessary services will be further developed on the WIPONET platform.

Assistance to IP Offices

14. It should be noted that the training of human resources and the newly-acquired levels of Internet access, provided in the framework of the WIPONET Project, have enabled IPOs to further modernize their information technology infrastructure and Office administration. As previously mentioned, WIPO will continue to offer bilateral or regional assistance through the NFAP/RFAP system and the IPOA program. It is hoped that such ongoing support activities will encourage IPOs to develop their own web-based applications and, in doing so, promote the use of the Internet through various promotion and education activities for users of the global IP system.

15. The SCIT is invited to comment upon and to take note of the contents of this document.

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