

INTERGOVERNMENTAL BUREAU FOR INFORMATICS

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
TRANSBORDER DATA FLOWS

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OBJECTIVE OF PAPER

1. To begin the process of defining the objectives of the IBI International Consultative Commission for the development of transborder data flows established following the Second World Conference on TDF ("the Commission").

OBJECTIVES OF COMMISSION

2. The objectives should include-
 - (a) The identification of a role which is useful non duplicative, and relevant to the objectives of IBI and the interests and needs of present and future Member countries of IBI.
 - (b) To be aware of sensitivities and needs for caution as well as current opportunities in the fields of TDF.

CAVEATS

3. The following caveats should be observed:
 - (a) Great care needs to be taken, for reasons of principle and practicality, that the participation (as experts or observers) of persons from non Member countries of IBI, is not seen as (and does not become) a distortion

- of the interests of IBI Member countries.
- (b) Care must also be taken to avoid needless repetition of work already done in a multitude of international agencies. Such work should be mobilised and used in such a way as to render it accessible to IBI Member countries, so far as relevant and useful.
- (c) The participation, as observers, of major informatics countries (USA, Japan and USSR) is desirable for the credibility of the Commission.
- (d) Yet the participation of observers must be on a strictly defined basis so that they do not distort the activities of the Commission or needlessly consume valuable time, costly in any body of this sort.
- (e) Some overlap with other international agencies and their work is inevitable. However, care should be taken to avoid interference in operational responsibilities of international bodies most relevant to IBI Members (eg ITU) - the role of the Commission in this regard should be to assist IBI to render accessible the vast amount of work being done in relevant bodies.
- (f) Given shortage of time and available resources, it would be desirable to define with precision at the outset a number of objectives for the Commission. These should be

modest at the outset so that, by achievements of a practical kind, the Commission can earn credibility.

OPERATIONAL FEATURES

4. It would be desirable if the Commission:
- (a) Had its own code of procedure;
 - (b) Met to consider pre-circulated papers;
 - (c) Defined specific policy goals and operational methods at the first meeting; and
 - (d) Aimed to produce documents which were brief, simply expressed and thereby accessible to administrators, politicians and citizens as well as technical experts.

POSSIBLE FOCUS - POTS

5. One possible focus of the Commission could be the definition of the priorities of IBI Member countries wishing to take advantage of TDF. In practical terms this could mean attention to the necessary preconditions outlined in recent reports such as the Maintland Report - viz POTS - "plain old telecom system". Without POTS talk of TDF for many IBI Member countries is unrealistic.

- Disadvantages -
- 1. It could be seen as intruding into the concerns of ITU;
 - 2. It is not very fashionable or novel; and
 - 3. Its focus is not specifically on TDF.

- Advantages -
- 1. It is the practical priority concern

- of many developing countries;
2. Without the basic telecom facility TDF will not be possible on any scale; and
 3. The work could be done sensitively and to support ITU's proper efforts to prime the pump in the developing world.

POSSIBLE FOCUS - IBI NET

6. A second possible focus of practical utility would be to help Member countries know more about IBI - net and the ways it could possibly be of stimulus and value to them.

POSSIBLE FOCUS - INFO POLICIES

7. A third possible focus would be to synthesize the vast mass of data and to endeavour to present a model for a coordinated information policy for countries such as the Member countries of IBI. The object should not be to serve up a ready made policy as such - that is a political issue of great sensitivity. Instead it would be to provide a framework (checklist) of issues to be addressed by countries in developing a rational, coherent and adequate information policy, with special emphasis on TDF. Such a policy could deal with
 - . Telecommunications issues - though not to duplicate ITU etc.
 - . Economic issues - though not to duplicate GATT etc.
 - . Technological issues.

- . Social issues - though not to duplicate UNESCO.
8. A report on a checklist for information policy issues could endeavour to synthesize for decision makers in IBI Member countries.
- Available policy options
 - Precis of recent experience eg Brazil, India.
 - Advantages and Disadvantages of Options.
 - Possible Conclusions.

OVERALL CONSIDERATION

9. Although the Commission would not have a function to negotiate international instruments, it should keep in mind one of the clear motivations of the early work of the Nordic Council, CoE and OECD on Privacy and TDF. The very universality of the technology renders it desirable that policy decisions - even if they are not co-ordinated because of different economic and social objectives of countries - are made within a common framework. The provision of that framework is itself a contribution to harmonisation.

TO SUM UP

10. In short, the focus of the Commission should be
- . Synthesising the vast amount of available data - by the use of appropriate experts.
 - . Communicating the synthesis in a way that will be accessible, useful to and read by key decision makers in IBI countries. Thought needs to be given to original and novel means of reporting eg by oral or video means instead

of exclusively the written page.

Avoiding the suggestion of ready made solutions suitable to all countries.

Contributing to the useful development of global policies with due regard to the worldwide mandate and unique role of IBI.

11. If IBI can, through this Commission, map out a specially useful function it may seize an initiative and enter a vacuum being left by other international agencies.

SUNSET CLAUSE

12. As a stimulus to achievement and as a check against extravagance or under achievement, the Commission should be subject to a defined budget and to an assigned duration. It is suggested that 3 years be the maximum duration after which progress be reviewed to consider whether it should have its mandate renewed. This could co-incide with a Third World Conference - but need not do so. The Commission should emphasise economy in its procedures - as far as possible performing its functions by pre-circulation of papers and adopting cost conscious procedures and methodology.

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