

EVIDENCE-BASED GOVERNANCE IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORD KEEPING FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

**SUMMARY SESSION 7, MONDAY, 31 MARCH 2003
2030 TO 2230 EDT**

Sites

- Washington
- Brunei
- Malaysia
- Singapore

The Current Situation and Present Needs

In the discussion of the current situation, participating countries began by outlining the current state of their records and access legislation and discussing the role of records in their societies. They then proceeded to discuss the following key issues:

- the fact that governments in this region of Asia have placed a good deal of importance on electronic records management; there is support for good records management and legislation to ensure that records are protected and managed
- the reality that governments have grown comfortable with the management of paper records in the last three to four decades but that with the development of electronic government there are new challenges
- the fact that various legal instruments have been put in place by government, but there is still a need to protect personal information and privacy of personal information; the national archives may be responsible for records care but may share that duty with other offices, such as a government secrecy department or public administration unit
- the fact that legislation can encourage the use of electronic records and electronic means of authentication, like digital signatures; it can also protect electronic records, first to ensure security against unauthorised modification or hacking, and secondly, to ensure the confidentiality of personal information that can be accessed in electronic databases
- the fact that legislation also encourages the use of secure records through acts such as the electronic transactions act; it was recognised that some governments have tried to keep their legislation technology neutral so that whatever new forms of technology are introduced, they will be accommodated by the legislation and there will be no need to go back to parliament each time new technology is used

- the fact that records management is a critical component of good government, but that records management must be closely linked to accountability; for example, auditors general reports are based on an examination of records and provide for parliament and citizens a statement on performance in the areas of financial management and accounting
- the knowledge that citizens have high expectations for services and there is a consequent demand for more information from the government; ICT provides the electronic means to supply these services to citizens through government websites
- the fact that any move to electronic government leads to a desire to enhance services and demonstrates the inefficiencies of paper-based systems; the recognition that electronic government is, and should be, included in national development plans
- the reality of challenges in the management of legacy documents and in the protection of paper and electronic records in new management systems; it is recognised that governments will have to redesign the ways in which they store and secure documents if they are to preserve their knowledge base
- the knowledge that the present challenge is to use ICT more effectively in the delivery of services and in the creation and management of records to support services; the irony is that there are large quantities of papers to be processed and yet there is a desire to go paperless
- the realisation that there is a need for trained personnel who can help to ensure that technology takes account of record keeping issues.

The Way Forward

Participants then considered actions that could be taken to improve the record keeping environment in their countries and around the world. They identified the following central issues:

- the fact that governments need to encourage all ministries to make use of websites to provide more information to citizens and members of the public, including government rules and regulations, and to promote on-line policy consultation, where policy papers are published for public consultation and to receive input and feedback from members of public and industry (a process that itself generates records)
- the need to ensure the integrity of information created in electronic form
- the importance of addressing challenges with respect to access, confidentiality and connectivity, finding the balance between the right to information and the right to privacy, and determining how much information the public can have
- the need to consider access now and in the future; when records are created electronically, and their survival cannot be guaranteed, there is a need to make sure that the hard copy is there to ensure that evidence will be protected

- the critical need for capacity building in records and archives management
- the related need for strong and effective policies on electronic records management, for continuous upgrading and improvement of systems, for a preservation strategy for electronic records and for certification and standards to ensure that agencies and departments are adhering to standards of record keeping
- the need to identify records management as the cornerstone of good governance and to address challenges in capacity building, hardware, systems and funding
- the need for standards to allow interoperability among stakeholders or agencies and to ensure there is a balance between security and access.