

# **THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORD KEEPING FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE**

**SUMMARY SESSION 9, FRIDAY 4 APRIL 2003  
0900 TO 1030 EDT**

## **Sites**

- Washington
- Nigeria

## **The Current Situation and Present Needs**

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

- the fact that Nigeria's electronic government policy and evolving ICT strategy aims to bring all ministries on board, ensuring that as they introduce automation they draw on collective knowledge and move toward accountability, transparency, anti corruption and enhanced performance
- the fact that the electronic government policy is designed to end separation between agencies, avoid duplication, enhance public service efficiency, empower local communities, link government functions, improve reporting and help connect the state governments; electronic systems are being applied to managing education, statistics, the census, health care, the judiciary, legislative proceedings and land registration
- the fact that government wants to participate in global records networks
- the knowledge that record systems created at the local level need to be linked to record systems at the federal level, which will require attention to the infrastructure needed to create an electronic government continuum as well as trained manpower
- the knowledge of the danger that if donors dictate the nature of development, records systems may be created in an ad hoc manner; the recognition that changes in the way that information is handled should be planned and introduced in phases
- the fact that the Office of the Head of Civil Service links the different aspects of electronic government, such as the electronic economy or electronic statistics; it has a responsibility to promote efficiency and effectiveness, which includes the way that records are generated, used, stored and retrieved.

## 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 need to make human resources records and financial records priorities for computerisation
- the fact that the application of IT to the problem of controlling ghost workers has made a real difference and the recognition that records professionals have an important contribution to make
- the need for government to encourage ministries to computerise their functions and impose sanctions on those that do not do so; civil servants and citizens need to be educated about what is involved; in this way the digital divide will gradually be bridged
- the need for the national ICT legislation committee to continue examining laws affecting electronic commerce cyber crimes, intellectual property rights and the processes that will make transactions legal in a court of law
- the importance of addressing the traditions of secrecy built up over decades and the recognition that records will need to be in good order if they are to be available to citizens and if they are to provide the basis for civil service reform
- the need to recognise that electronic government will develop slowly and that as part of the process, systems for managing records will have to be developed carefully, with career opportunities and respect for those who keep records and an end to the present pattern of treating registries like ‘Siberia’ and dumping problem staff there
- the need to ensure that the retrieval of both paper and electronic records is effective, so that when information is needed it can be retrieved quickly.