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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OF THE REMOTE AUDIT OF THE D.98A DIRECTORY

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DIRECTORY AUDIT TEAM (DAT)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REMOTE DAT AUDIT OF THE D.98A DIRECTORY

(Submitted by the Chair of DAT)

Introduction

1. For the first time, the DAT meeting for the audit of the D.98A directory was carried out remotely (i.e. there was no formal meeting of the team, but instead the team conducted the audit via e-mail from wherever they happened to be during the elapsed period of the audit). The audit was started at the beginning of January 1998 and successfully completed on the 5th of March 1998, when an “approved” audit statement was E-Mailed to the Secretariat, which provided good support with respect to ‘roll-overs’ for corrections.

2. The meeting was held during the period 2 January to 5th March 1998 inclusive. The membership and location of the DAT members was D. Trafford (Chair) - UK; J. Allen - UK; D. Dobbing - Australia; K-D. Naujok - US; H. Schlieper - Germany; F. Vuilleumier (Vice-chair) - Switzerland; with support from the UN Secretariat in Geneva.

3. As could be expected, both benefits and disadvantages were experienced resulting from the remote process, but overall the process was carried out successfully. Some - but not all - of the disadvantages could probably be overcome by better planning, if the remote audit principle is to be continued.

4. As compared to previous five day audit meetings, the remote audit extended to two months (partly due to “home office” business commitments on the part of DAT members). Relatively minor problems or queries which would take a short time to resolve in a formal meeting, took longer to resolve remotely - a problem which will be exacerbated when newer, less experienced members join the DAT team. In particular, the Chair’s tasks were far more time-consuming during the remote audit. This can be demonstrated by the fact that during the period of the pre-planning and implementation of the audit, the Chair received/created 460+ e-mails. Since all of these were circulated between at least the 6 members of DAT (with some also being copied to the Secretariat), this means that approximately 2,750 individual e-mails were processed by the team alone.

5. The full DAT report contains ten recommendations arising from the audit (all of which have been forwarded to ESG, JTAG, and to Regional Secretariats). The five main ones are shown below:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

**E-MAIL ADDRESS ON DMRs
(TO ESG, JRT/EWG & TO ALL MDs/JMs)**

To facilitate the task of resolving any issues which arise during the course of future directory audits, DAT recommends to ESG & EWG that an announcement of the following requirement should be made at the opening Plenary Session of the Miami JRT:

As far as possible, ALL future DMRs submitted (including if possible, those reviewed by JTAG at the Miami JRT) should include an e-mail address, via which the submitter of the DMR can be contacted. This could also facilitate both the DPT (and possibly TAG/JTAG) processes, so that DMR submitters can be contacted for any points arising from their DMR which require clarification.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

**ELECTRONIC & PAPER COPIES OF NEW MESSAGES
(TO ESG, EWG, UN/SECRETARIAT, DPT, DAT, TAGs, JTAG & ALL JMs)**

During the course of the directory audit of D.98A (audited remotely via e-mail) serious problems were encountered with new messages submitted for the directory, because of the fact that copies of earlier boilerplates (heavily amended by hand) were submitted. The worst offenders were the boilerplates submitted for the ENTREC, CHACCO & BALANC messages. The problems were compounded by the fact that the audit team had to work from photocopies of photocopies, many of which were indecipherable.

All of these problems arose because an existing rule (for the submission of a clean electronic copy of new message boilerplates to the UN/Secretariat, coupled with the submission of a clean paper copy) had been ignored.

DAT therefore recommends that for future directories, TAGs, JTAG, the UN/Secretariat, DPT & DAT be given the authority NOT TO APPROVE any new message which has been submitted without a clean paper copy being made available for review, and in the case of the UN/Secretariat, that it should reject such messages if a clean electronic copy of the boilerplate has not been provided.

DAT also recommends to ESG & EWG that an announcement to this effect be made at the opening plenary of the Miami JRT meeting.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

COMMON ELEMENTS MARKED FOR DELETION (TO JM10, TAGs & JTAG)

DAT notes that JM10 submitted DMRs for the deletion of elements 3295; 3398; 3401; 3403; 3405 & 7405 used in the NAM segment (which has now been marked for deletion). Although all of these DMRs were approved, since these data elements are also used in batch messages, both DPT & DAT have retained these elements in the EDED directory, with no "Marked for deletion" indicator, and for the moment retaining the usage indicator of (C), (since the elements continue to be used in the I-EDI AVLREQ & AVLRSP messages).

To draw attention to the problem, the following note has been added to each of the above elements:

"Element marked for deletion for interactive use in D.01A
Usage indicator will revert to (B) in D.01A"

This problem raises the need for a further amendment to document R.1023/Rev.3 (see Recommendation 4).

Care should be taken in the future by TAGs and JTAG (presumably via the respective batch and interactive TACs), that any data element requested for deletion which has a usage indicator of (C) in the directory, should be reviewed carefully, either to ensure that both sets of users agree the deletion, or to endorse the DMR that the usage indicator should be changed from (C) to (B) or (I), either immediately or after 3 years, as the case may be.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

AMENDMENT TO R.1023/Rev.3 FOR ITEMS MARKED FOR DELETION (TO ESG; JRT/EWG; DPT; DAT & UN/SECRETARIAT)

Arising from the problems identified in Recommendation 3 above, it is recommended that an additional change indicator be created for use at data element level, which means:

"Marked for deletion for either batch or interactive use. See attached note."

The note related to a data element with a usage indicator of (C) and marked for deletion in EDED, should take the following form:

"Data element marked for deletion for (*interactive or batch*) use in D.??? (*directory identification 3 years ahead*).

Usage indicator will revert to [(*B*) or (*I*)] in D.??? (*directory identification 3 years ahead*) and is replaced by (*data element tag, or composite data element tag, or segment tag*)**.

(Note that the entities shown in italics within brackets above, are the alternative entries which could appear in the note, as applicable for the circumstances - **see below for explanation of the entries shown in the last bracket).

The existing rule "that no new message submitted by (batch or interactive users - as the case may be) shall specify the entity/entities so noted for use" AND "that after the 3 year period expires, the entities so noted shall be replaced automatically by the new entity/entities requested in their place" shall continue to apply.

For items marked for deletion in any of the following directories (EDSD; EDCD; IDSD & IDCD), the note attached to the item when it is first shown as "marked for deletion" shall in future contain at least the following information:

* the identification of the directory from which it will be deleted on "expiry" (which is the current rule): AND

** which item (or items) have been approved as its replacement. (In some cases, there may not be a "one for one" replacement. For example, if a segment plus some or all of its composites and/or data elements are also marked for deletion, to be replaced by a new segment containing different composites and/or data elements, then in both the composite and element directories, it might be necessary to refer to the replacement segment as the prime source for the replacement value or values).

The purpose of adding the second bullet (**) is to ensure that should any message still be using the item(s) at the time of expunction from a directory, DPT and/or DAT will know (three years later) what action needs to be taken. This could be particularly important if there is a turnover of members in either of the teams.

Based upon DAT's experience that users have been overlooking notes shown after the function in segments, and after the description in composites, DAT again recommends that they should be placed at the end of the entries for segments, composites and data elements (as is done for syntax service directories). R.1023/Rev.3 already applies this rule for notes attached to data elements.

Lastly, a paper developed by DAT during the D.97B audit which has further points for consideration regarding amendment to document R.1023/Rev.3, has been passed directly to ESG, for it to consider how these should be dealt with.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

COMMISSION OF CROSS-REFERENCING IN D.98A (TO ESG & JRT/EWG)

DAT understands that as a result of discussions at the last JRT meeting, it was agreed, as a interim measure, that cross-referencing at the segment level should be introduced in the D.98A directory (pending further discussion on user requests for the introduction of cross-referencing at all levels in the directory). DAT notes that this has not been implemented in D.98A, and draws it to the attention of ESG & EWG.

In addition, DAT draws attention to Recommendations 3 & 4 above, which, had full cross-referencing already been implemented, would probably not have arisen, since the mistake would far more likely to have been identified at the outset by both the submitter and the TAGs responsible for approving the DMRs for the deletion of data elements used by both interactive and batch users.

6. During the course of the remote audit, the advantages and disadvantages identified by the team have been identified in a full report provided to ESG & JRT/EWG. Wherever possible, the report identifies possible remedial action which might be put into place to overcome some of the problems, so that a decision can be taken regarding both the continuation of the remote audit process and the continuing stability of the directories.

7. Since the Chair of DAT is resigning from the post after this audit, he would like to thank the DAT & DPT teams, and the UN/Secretariat staff (both past and present in all cases) for their support over the years, which although not without occasional problems, resulted in a good rapport between team members, and certainly in better quality directories.
