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STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Technology
(Geneva, Switzerland, 15-17 February 1999)

Topic (i): The impact of Internet on the statistical production and dissemination process

SUPPORTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

Submitted by U.S. Department of Commerce¹

SUMMARY

1. We know technology advances continue to change our environment. The growth of the Internet has been phenomenal. At the end of 1997 there were approximately 100 million Internet users worldwide. Already the Internet has had enormous impact on the dissemination of government data. As the twentieth century comes to a close, an increasing number of citizens have Internet access at home or work, and telecommunications companies continue to make the investments in an infrastructure that will enable higher-speed Internet access.

2. An increased emphasis has been placed on proactive information distribution by all U.S. Government agencies. The continued development and expansion of the National Information Infrastructure (NII) has continued to receive political attention. In July 1996 the U.S. Congress passed The Information Technology Management Reform Act of July 1996 (Clinger Cohen Act of 1996). The Act created U.S. Chief Information Officer positions throughout the Federal government and codified the Government Information Technology Services

¹ Prepared by Alan C. Lorish, Jr..

Board (GITSB). GITSB was established to identify and promote the development of innovative technologies and systems that facilitate the implementation of an electronic government.

3. An impediment to achieving the goals of these initiatives is the severe worldwide shortage of skilled Information Technology (IT) personnel. Our ability to find or develop the skilled people we need will determine how successfully the IT revolution continues to reinvent the delivery of government services. In order to assess the current skill base and to determine in what skill categories shortfalls might be placed, GITSB created a Survey of Internet/Intranet Skills that was mailed to 32 Chief Information Officers throughout the U.S. government. Critical skill shortages were identified in all seven of the Internet applications areas defined in the survey. The survey also found evidence of lack of skill standards and certification paths across the U.S. agencies.

4. After analysis of the survey results GITSB approved the movement toward 'standards' and 'best practices' for Web development work and, as part of this effort, the creation of a "Webmaster Certification Program." This was to seek the use of private sector training/learning professionals for the establishment of a learning curriculum for employees on all aspects of IT support.