

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM COUNTRY REPORTS

### Day 1

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Good Afternoon. I am the ICA Treasurer and Editor and it's been my privilege to read the country reports that you've all sent in. Now we are going to have a discussion on those reports. We call this the ICA Round Table. Now, the ICA Round Table, what is it? Well, the Round Table, in fact, has been a major feature of ICA conferences for over twenty-five years now, so it's well worn and well used. Somehow it retains its popularity, it's somewhat unique and by that I mean, I don't know of any other conference that has this particular type of forum in a session. Let me explain what I mean by unique. Every year every member country of ICA sends in a country report on what they are doing within their particular sphere of influence in developing IT within the government area. Of course lately it's been mainly within the sphere of e-gov or e-government. So those hot topics are all sent to myself as editor and then I'm able to look through those and pick up the items of really hot topics, usually looking more towards those who are emerging rather than those that are already with us because in the past this session has often led to future study groups and in some cases have even led to a theme of conference. So it has been quite influential in the way in which we do our future business. For example, just within the last couple of years we identified the issue of the digital divide and open source possibly earlier than any other organisation. Now, all the country reports that I've received are now available to the national representatives on our website, they've had the opportunity to read them over the last few days; it is in only the last few days I have read them myself. This year there are actually twenty-one country reports already filed and available on the internet for the national representatives to see. I know that over the next three days we'll be talking about one or two topics that have particularly caught my eye in reading those reports. Now there will be an opportunity for all delegates also to read those reports by the time they get home. I will be setting up on the ICA website a delegates page. Now, our website is <http://www.ica-it.org/> If you go to <http://www.ica-it.org/delegates/> (that is by adding '/delegates/') you will go to the delegates page. You will then be asked for a user ID and a password. Your user name will be 'delegate' and your password will be 'conference38'. By the time you get home all the valuable information that is held in those country reports will be available to you. It also means that any item that is of particular interest that you pick up during the next three days you will be able to read it in much more detail when you get home. However, that is not the only thing that will be available for you on that page. I also will again, by next week, have all the slides at conference available to you. So you don't need to download them all here or you don't need to take huge amounts of paper home with copies of all the slides. They will all be available to you very quickly. That means you don't have until Christmas for the proceedings to be published before you have access to the PowerPoint slides or the country reports: they will all be available to you next week.

Now, over the next three days I will be raising those topics that caught my eye in the country reports. Basically I will ask someone to open the debate on the specific subject I raise and then we will throw out to the floor for questions to be asked or for

comments to be made. Now, at this point anybody in this room is welcome to contribute, all you have to do is catch my eye, and I will call upon you. So everybody has the chance to speak. It doesn't matter whether you are a national representative, a guest or whether you are just here for the first time to give a presentation, or a keynote speaker, whatever. Just in mentioning the guests: can I just say that Romania being here as a guest for the first time have very kindly sent us a country report of their own, so we will be able to catch up on what has been going on in Romania. I thank you very much for the kind thought.

Many of you have played this game before, so I expect to have to call upon very few people to speak. Most of you will be only too willing and hopeful of doing so. Don't worry if you don't want to speak because I will then probably ask you anyway so you might as well volunteer! On the other hand, if I ask you to speak on a topic and you don't feel competent to do that or if you feel is somebody else in your organisation or from your country is better placed to do so, feel free to pass the buck. I'm not here to embarrass anybody, except myself.

Also, on Thursday there will be an opportunity for anyone to raise questions on other people's country reports, if they wish. So, let's get down to business. The quality and quantity of the country reports has been simply outstanding. The breadth, the depth, it has been excellent. Five years ago, e-gov was a dream. Now very definitely, it is a reality. It works, some people say it works well! This afternoon, I am going to ask for comments from the floor to show quite categorically that it is available, that it is here, and that it is working. So I will call upon a few countries just to say a few words to prove that. However, for the rest of the Round Table sessions, I am going to set you a challenge and I am going to tell you what it is now so that you can think about it. I am going to suggest that e-government is here, that it works but it has weaknesses. I am going to suggest those weaknesses are even at the strategy level, and I am going to see what you say, hopefully in rebuttal. Now the two areas that I am highlighting at the moment, and I am sure that the first one could probably take the three days anyway, is that the main basis of e-government is that it should serve the citizen. I have yet to see many benefits to the citizen. In fact, I should suggest your reports are more fulsome in the praise of what they are going to do for the citizen rather than what they are doing. And I would like your comments on that.

The second one was actually touched upon this morning: the Internet. E-gov is probably a strategic necessity for the fulfilment of e-gov but what happens if the Internet fails? What happens if we no longer have it for 24 hours, or 48 hours? Can you survive? Can e-government survive? More on that later. So now to help me prove that e-government is here and works well, I am going to go first of all to Sweden and ask them to say a few words. When you speak, would you please give your name and country so that it is covered in the report, and it is covered in the proceedings. Thank you.

**Knut Rexed, Sweden.** Thank you Larry. We presented a country report, it shows you that Sweden has a very de-centralised distributed administration, which has so far been content to rely on an overall strategic directions from the government, without any vertical climb back of agencies trying to work into and succeeding in developing those services. Is now moving into a more systematic way of working. That is the benefits of our way depend on the fact that although we have a number of independently managed identities in our public administration, we have managers that

are given the freedom to manage. And given the incentive to manage and to achieve results, it works for us. But we have seen how that is not enough that all of the single parts achieve results. We have to be more systematic. We have, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, an e-government board that has power to lay down mandatory directives that has so far only adopted guidelines. It is the council's part to start softly and sharpen the guidelines, tighten them bit-by-bit. When people get used to the guidelines they can become stronger, more mandatory. We have also started to produce common platforms which will be supplied and re-used for pay principles: they will be voluntary at first. But we also tabled a discussion paper lately, looking for the next step, where to go on from here.

First, we are putting the question whether to re-define it along the lines of this conference. It is no longer talking about e-government. We are talking about producing citizen value and cost efficiency in a new society. And in the normal past we have always worked within developing public governance. But now in this society permeated by new technologies that will provide new opportunities for citizen value. And I think, Larry, what, even if we did not have any in our country report, we could at least give you a few examples of citizen value. Because of the fact that people start making their tax declarations, mention the tax business online, looking for job placement information online, it is not because they are forced them to do it. It is because they find that it is of value for them to do it. We also approached the question of an architecture for our e-government work. This is not the type of architecture that most of you have discussed, this is not a technical architecture. It has no technical stuff in it; there is no detailed stuff in it. It is to try to draw up a way of presenting how different parts of our very distributed administration have worked together in developing information resources; generic back-office functions; interoperability demands; network functions. To making sure that all the different artists in Sweden start from the same picture, of what it is all about, and where we are going. We will discuss that during the next month with other government agencies and other interested parties in Sweden. We expect to come back to the government next Spring, with more detailed proposals for government action.

**Larry Caffrey, ICA.** Thank you very much, Knut, very interesting. We are very lucky in ICA that we have links with some of the wider community: for instance we have Jean-Pierre Weidert here from the European Commission, we have Edwin Lau from OECD. And Edwin, I would like you perhaps to give the slightly wider perspective for the position on e-government, rather than just the members here.

**Edwin Lau, OECD.** Thanks Larry. I don't think I can tell you better than you already know what it is that all of you do, but perhaps a couple of observations on some of the trends that we have seen over the span of OECD countries. First of all, let me tell you what we have been doing to gather this information. Over the course of the past year, we have created an ad-hoc group of people responsible for e-government and this group met three times in 2003. Three times in the last twelve months and there was really a sense of urgency which led to this need to meet so often because we sense that the e-government agenda is shifting and that, in order to anticipate what those changes are, they needed to be more discussion among OECD countries. So we divided up the topics around five areas, many of which I have already heard or seen on the agenda, and some have even been covered this morning in the keynote address. Looking at the business case for e-governments, and what the methodologies are for achieving that; looking at how you achieve a user focus e-

government which is, sort of, Larry's challenge to us. How countries are organising their e-government's initiative in order to foster the benefits of seamless service delivery, and increased integration. How we identify common business processes for enterprise architecture and how e-government is leading us into a broader, multi-channel perspective, looking not only at e-government but its impact on other channels of service delivery. This, along with a series of e-government country reviews that we are doing – we have just finished the reviews of Mexico, Norway and Finland we started last year. And now we are starting our review of e-government in Denmark, who has provided us a certain amount of data sets for the OECD to start thinking about what are the challenges that are arising for countries. What we have seen is, that increasingly there seems to be a convergence of objectives and I think Costis Toregas really summarised it well this morning in terms of what those are. The user or citizen focus, the need for seamless service delivery, there is only one government as far as the user is concerned. The demands for increased productivity as a result of ICT, and also for providing secure channels. These are things which I don't think anyone in this room would disagree with, as something that e-government needs to achieve.

We are also seeing a convergence of the tools, in terms of enterprise architectures, service architectures, some of the consultation tools and I think that these presentations and the networking that is going on give people the opportunity to see how others are facing similar problems. But what we are seeing is that countries come from various different perspectives, and where I sit in the OECD is as public governance directorate, and so we are looking at e-government from a public management, in a public governance perspective. And therefore the focus is how e-government can improve what the business of government, what government does on an everyday basis. So therefore, you cannot take the ICT out of context of the administrations that it comes from. And so we see, Knut was describing earlier, the centralised Nordic approach; in many ways it is already network government that we are trying to achieve. We have also seen some models of very strong leadership seen for example so recently in the envoy's office, a very visible symbol for many people, because they were the first to, in such a broad way, say that we are going to put political responsibility behind this initiative, and so many people were looking at that, and think, how is that going to work out? OMD in the US was also another kind of symbol for many people in terms of an approach. We also have some facilitating approaches; like in the e-government unit in New Zealand, or in Australia of not forcing anyone to do anything, but weighing out the tools and some of the thinking, so that agencies can pick that up if they see the benefits for themselves. And even coming from these different perspectives I think there is a convergence. While Sweden has a very de-centralised approach they are thinking about what are the central, or what are the guidelines that would be necessary to allow de-centralised policy-making. So in a way, you have to centralise some aspects of e-government in order to allow others to be de-centralised. In countries that take a more central approach, they also realising that there is a need for buying on the part of agencies, and for institutional innovation of some of the political pushes or a consolidation of some of the political gains that have been made. So I don't think we are all going to converge into one model of e-government but we are seeing that because there are the global pressures that everyone is facing we are all sort of struggling along in a similar direction.

Just to close up some of the challenges that we have seen: in that earlier session I was pushing speakers on how they are quantifying some of the social benefits and that is one of the things that we have seen, is that there is some work that has been done on quantifying benefits for users and citizens, and businesses that is where we have had the most luck. Also, benefits in terms of productivity gains for government, but some of these are more amorphous benefits for the public are very real, and they are one of the reasons why we do need e-government; it's really early to try to pin them down and to make that case for government. So that is one of the areas that we are looking at.

Secondly, I liked very much the way Costas raised this morning the challenge of creating e-citizens so that if you simply ask people what it is they want from e-government they are not necessarily going to know because they may either not have experienced that service before or they haven't thought through what the possibilities are. So rather than simply a one-way consultation or even just one-way listening or one-way communication it's a circular approach where you are taking feedback, coming up with new possibilities and then sharing those with citizens again.

We have seen that taking a user focused approach has some structural implications and thinking those through and how that translates into action in each country for its context in history is a big challenge and I think the multi-channel is probably one of the areas where we are really going to have to think once e-government sort of explodes out of its limits and is able to achieve its real potential what does that mean in terms of what is the driving force for those changes. We have said several times that it is not just IT it's about the business but how do we bring those people on board and what are the new government structures that are going to provide at the same time enough solid action and maintaining an overall understanding of what it is we are trying to achieve.

**Larry Caffrey.** Okay, thank you very much. Now to Israel

**Nachman Oron, Israel.** I would like to point out one problem, one issue in which I think we are moving in the right direction. As you know I have presented here in ICA maybe more than ten years ago the EIS project and ever since there have been many other projects in other ministries in Israel and each one started building its own infrastructure and digitising maps again and collecting information and everybody was happy and very successful for himself. Now at last approximately a year ago we realised that there is much too much money spent in the different offices and co-ordination of the activity could bring much better infrastructure and common data base and also better projects that would not cost less, that will cost probably not less but will not spend more money in the future so the initiative is to have a national geographic information system co-ordinated via a portal, a GIS portal where first the government and then the private sector will be able to go in and have the information there so the national geographic database will be open to everybody and we will cut the cost of re-digitising efforts.

This is I think interesting and we discussed it yesterday at the National Representative Meeting and this will probably be also a study group for next year since we realise there are many countries who have the same problem who want to join the study group. Thank you.

**Larry Caffrey.** Thank you. I am going over to Canada now. For many years I think we have all been impressed with your rate of development, your introduction, development of e-gov but I was most interested in your report to see that having achieved so much you are now re-thinking the whole strategic issue from the top down. Perhaps just a comment on that.

**Simon Gauthier, Canada.** Our government on-line initiative, just to put in context, will be completed by next spring. The cut-off date for the project is March 31 2005. By this time we will have spent approximately one billion dollars Canadian in putting this in place. There is many ways to account for the money but roughly a billion dollars.

What we are starting to find though is that we knew that government on-line meant the re-thinking of the way government did its business. We knew that it would imply some change, we just didn't know how deep or how extensive or how transformative this change would be and along the way as we got closer to the end we failed to communicate adequately this change to the political circles so as a result when Larry mentioned that we were trying to re-think government on-line from the top down, its really been re-thought from the top down because we are basically and I'm not saying its being resisted but it is being re-thought in a sense that we are not really having to look at what does e-government mean in a country like Canada. We have four levels of government, Federal, Provincial, Municipal and Regional in between and from a citizen perspective we talk a lot about citizen centric services. From a citizen perspective they worry about two things, they want the service when they need it and they pay taxes so they would like the taxes to be as low as possible and really don't care what level of government serves them. So when you are in government you see these levels of government as very important so branding is an issue but from the citizen perspective they really don't care, they see a box called government and they pay too much for them so the whole concept of service delivery and inter-jurisdictional seamless world which we are being driven to is the issue being really re-thought right now in Canada. Thank you.

**Larry Caffrey.** So within the space of a few minutes you have after all after all produced reports saying just how well we have done in the development of e-gov; two of the leading contenders have said yes we've got there but we are re-thinking the whole thing again, we are starting again. Singapore was very much in that idiom as well so perhaps a word from Choy Peng.

**Choy Peng WU, Singapore.** Okay, I'd just like to say that in Singapore government there is no question raised about e-government, there is no question raised about whether we should have done it the question raised is could we have done it faster.

I think there are a few reasons why we don't have a sense of hype going down to the trough of depression because e-government was never put on the political agenda. We never hang the e-government programme on politics or politicians. It has from day one been positioned as a tool for public sector reform and public sector effectiveness and public sector efficiency so the politicians bless it remotely, they support it but they were never under the illusion that they could win votes based on e-government ranking. So I think that is one.

Secondly we never put new money into the e-government programme. There was no new money asked from parliament for e-government. It was merely a blueprint, a roadmap of sorts to align existing investments in IT projects. So ministries do not get new money, they don't ask for new money just because they need to align with e-government, they just make sure that if they have ten IT projects that they need to put in those that support the e-government priorities should go first. So because there was no new money asked for, no new money invested in e-government so nobody can ask have we spent too much. I mean the real answer we have spent nothing on the e-government programme.

I think these are two key reasons why e-government is still fashionable in Singapore. Administrators below the net, the politicians believe in it so we are still all right with that. There is really no sense that it is no longer fashionable or you know maybe we should really look at the whole thing, I think there is two primary reasons it was never on the political agenda and secondly we never ran to government to ask for new money for the initiative.

Okay, thank you Choy Peng. Now to Australia.

**Robyn Fleming, Australia.** I was just going to say I didn't think that from an Australian perspective we were in a trough of disillusionment so much as the agenda for countries with multiple levels of government. The agenda has changed; so whilst it was about faster service delivery (that was easy, that was an administrative matter) bureaucrats could just get on with doing it however difficult that was when it was first conceived five years ago. But, once it becomes about service improvement or new services then it's a political agenda and we confront all of the institutional barriers that we've always faced in jurisdictional government and so that's why I think that we are now getting into some of the heavier going areas. People have to redefine the agendas as not technical agendas but as political service improvement innovation agendas.

**Larry Caffrey, ICA.** Thank you. Now it's been only a short session this afternoon, my objective in picking this particular item was that I think is that we have been able to demonstrate quite clearly that e-government is here and it works. Also I think I've raised the issue that those who have made it work well in the past are re-thinking the whole strategy again so it's not over yet.

Can I just remind you that tomorrow I am going to start seeking from you some real tangible benefits from your e-government programmes. Thank you for this afternoon we are closing now because I am now going to ask Nachman Oron, the Chair of ICA, to introduce the final item today.