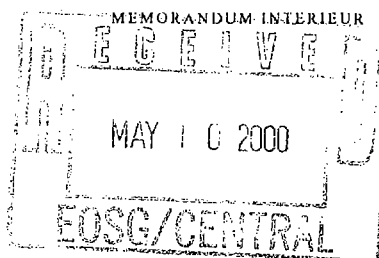


# United Nations Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Mr. Iqbal Riza  
A: Chef de Cabinet



DATE: 10 June 1997

REFERENCE:

THROUGH:

S/C DE:

FROM: Samir Sanbar  
DE: Assistant Secretary-General  
for Public Information

SUBJECT:

OBJET:

WELCOM demonstration

JUN 12 1997  
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As a follow-up to Mr. Schwab's offer and the contact made by one of his assistants, a United Nations team from DPI and the Information Technology Services Division of DAM attended a demonstration of the World Electronic Community (WELCOM) videoconferencing network organized by Advanced Video Communications (AVC). The World Economic Forum, the contributing partner to the network, is a non-profit institution.

The current size of the WELCOM network is 70 Members, with plans to expand to 350 in the next six months and 500 by the end of the year. The current breakdown of the membership is 70% CEOs and Presidents of multinational companies, 20% academic institutions as content providers and 10% ministers of governments. So far government membership includes Singapore, South Africa, with Switzerland in the process of joining. Membership fees are \$8,500 - \$13,000 per year which includes hardware and software. The geographical capacity of the network at present includes North America and Europe, with plans for expansion to Asia, Africa (although central Africa is problematic), Russia and Latin America.

In practical terms and once it becomes fully operational, WELCOM will allow its members who ultimately sign up to meet and interact virtually face-to-face with other members without leaving their offices. It will be able to televise on screen images of up to four participants at a time, to a maximum of 50 active video conferees. It will be more secure than the Internet or satellite transmission because the technology it uses provides users with a closed circuit.

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From the United Nations's point of view, the system's distinctive feature, once fully operational, is that it would offer its UN users membership to an elite, exclusive club of global "movers and shakers". Its distinct advantage of course is that it is being offered free of charge. The UN Secretary-General would thus have free access to this exclusive group, along with 22 work stations which he can distribute to senior officials at Headquarters and throughout the UN system. The only cost involved would be a local telephone connect charge. In distributing the work stations among senior UN officials, it should be borne in mind that currently and in the foreseeable future, the majority of the network's membership will be found in the private economic and business sector. It could therefore serve as a tool to forge closer links with those segments.

WELCOM is a welcome initiative. I understand that Mr. Schwab has a list of names of the senior officials throughout the UN system who could use it effectively. The next step is to decide on the names and set up the connection. Possibly a letter from the Secretary-General could be sent to potential recipients, particularly heads of agencies and another letter of appreciation to Mr. Schwab, indicating the list of potential UN participants.

Please let me know if you would require any follow-up on my side.