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Doha, 16–20 November 2008

"Together we make the difference": information on the system for paperless meetings

Introduction

1.   At their Nineteenth Meeting, held in September 2007 in Montreal, Canada, the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer warmly welcomed the offer of the Government of Qatar to host in 2008 the joint eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and the Twentieth Meeting of the Parties in Doha.

2.   Immediately after the Nineteenth Meeting and the twentieth anniversary activities in September 2007, the Ozone Secretariat and the Government of Qatar initiated discussions to explore ways of making extensive use of available information technologies to facilitate the meetings in Doha with a view to realizing the inherent benefits of existing information technologies, chief among them being to minimize the use of paper. The Government of Qatar embraced this proposal from the beginning and has been fully committed to make it a reality.

3.   The Government of Qatar, in consultation with the Ozone Secretariat, the secretariat of the Multilateral Fund and the conference service teams from Qatar and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, proceeded to develop a software and hardware package for conducting paperless multilateral meetings, which is to be launched as a practical system at the forthcoming ozone meetings in November 2008.

4.   The paperless meeting concept is indeed a simple one, and at the same time, it represents a ground-breaking endeavour to conduct a full-scale United Nations negotiation meeting involving more than 700 participants from 193 Parties, and also from a range of academic institutions and United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

5.   The system has been conceived and developed to enable the participants at the meeting:

        (a)   To have access online to all the meeting and background documents, in all the United Nations official languages in which they are available;

        (b)   To have access online to all in-session documents, including conference-room papers and draft reports, in all the United Nations languages in which they are available;

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(c)   To prepare and submit online conference-room papers to the Secretariat;

(d)   To be informed of contact group meetings, other side meetings and various events and administrative announcements.

6.   The Government of Qatar will provide all participants with a laptop with the necessary software for the paperless meetings already installed. Participants using their own computers can also be assisted in installing the necessary software on those personal laptops. Arrangements are being made to provide a dedicated team of information technology specialists to work as meeting-room attendants to provide participants with prompt assistance in using the system and to troubleshoot as necessary.

7.   The Government of Qatar and the Ozone Secretariat appreciate that this initiative represents a major change from traditional paper-based meetings and requires a significant cultural shift in terms of managing documents and conducting the meetings. The Secretariat and the Government of Qatar encourage Parties to support this initiative and beg their indulgence and patience in making this pilot experience a success. The slogan for this meeting, "Together we make the difference", is indeed true. There is no doubt that participants, by working together, can set new standards for conducting United Nations meetings and a positive example to the world.

8.   The present note provides details on the key features of the system to serve as a guide to participants. A set of questions that may arise from the users of the system and the corresponding answers can be found in the annex to this note.

I.   Using the paperless system

A.   Registration process and obtaining laptops

9.   During the on-site registration process, soon after receiving an identification badge, each participant will also be issued with a pre-configured laptop, a flash disk, a username and a password for accessing the system. The laptops will need to be returned at the end of the meeting; participants will, however, be able to keep the flash disks. Participants with their own laptops can use them to access the system. The information technology attendants will assist participants to install the required software and discuss the level of functionality that they will have.

B.   Training and support on the system for paperless meeting

10.   Demonstrations and training on the operation of the paperless workflow system are scheduled for 15 November at the meeting venue and will also be given during the first morning of each meeting at the meeting venue. The dedicated team of information technology specialists will be available daily to help users if so required.

C.   Starting the system on your computer or laptop

11.   The desktop of the issued laptops will include an icon labelled "Conference Portal", similar to the one depicted in figure 1, which can be used for accessing the system. In addition, and especially for participants using their own laptops, any browser may be used with the web address http://unepserver/for accessing the system at the meeting venue:

Figure 1 - Icon for accessing the system for paperless meeting

12.   Upon initial start-up, the system will display the main conference home page as shown in figure 2. From this page, participants can then select the particular meeting for which the documents are to be viewed. Participants will only be able to access documents for meetings in which they are participating.

Figure 2 – Main conference home page

D.   Accessing distributed documents

13.   After selecting the meeting for which the documents are to be viewed, as explained in the section above, participants will find that documents are grouped into three or more the following categories, as depicted in figure 3 below: announcements, conference-room papers (CRPs), pre-session documents, background documents, presentations and draft reports. Participants can select which category of documents they wish to view by selecting the appropriate tab, and then, to view a particular document, selecting the appropriate document title on the screen.

14.   Conference-room papers, pre-session documents and draft reports will be presented in the six official United Nations languages. Participants can access documents in their preferred language by selecting the appropriate tab.

Figure 3 – Conference-room papers, pre-session documents and draft reports will be presented in the six official United Nations languages

E.   Submitting a conference-room paper or any other document, including announcements, to the Secretariat

15.   Each Party will nominate one person who will be assigned the role of submitting documents, including conference-room papers, presentations and announcements, to the Secretariat. The nominated person will then be assigned a special user-name and password that will enable them to submit documents on behalf of their delegation. All members of the same delegation will be able to view their own submissions to the Secretariat but only the nominated person will be able to submit (or upload) and manage those documents and interact with the Secretariat through the facilities under that documents

page. The link would be named according to the country or organization name. The link depicted in figure 4 shows, by way of example, the link that the Government of Qatar would use for submitting conference-room papers and other documents.

16.   In situations where a group of Parties wish to submit a joint conference-room paper, they would have to nominate one Party actually to submit the paper to the Secretariat. They need, therefore, to ensure that the contents of the paper reflect the full list of Parties involved in the particular submission. This is usually done by including the information in the titles of the paper.
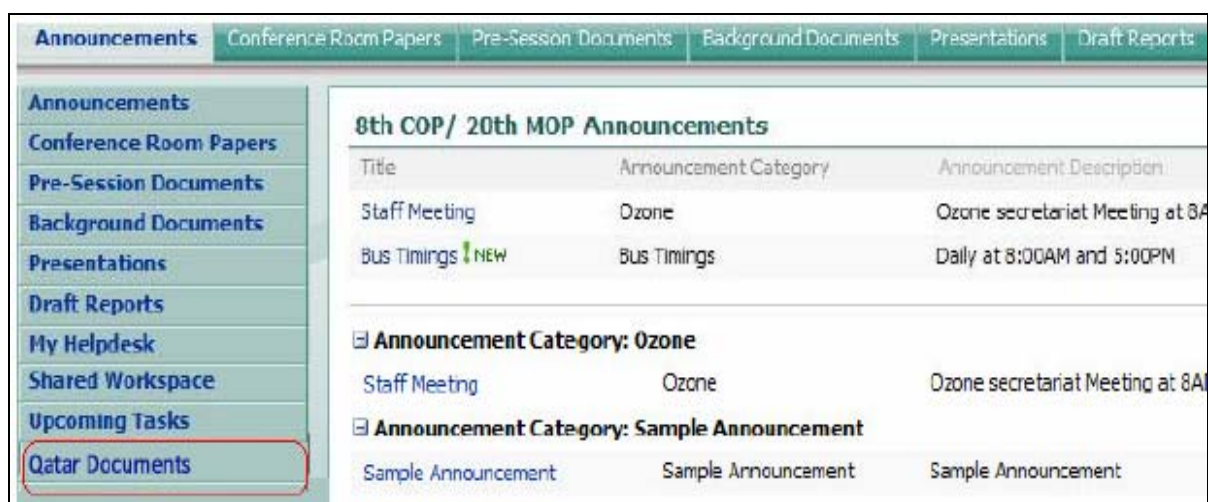

Figure 4 - Link for submitting any documents, including conference-room papers, presentations and announcements, to the Secretariat

F.   Contact groups

17.   When contact groups are formed, special and private working areas will be created for the contact group members. Since the members are not usually known in advance, the people actually attending the meetings of a specific group would find an information technology attendant at the meeting venue who would then add those attendees to the group of users allowed to view documents that the group may generate.

18.   From among the members of the contact group, they would have to nominate one member, or the Secretariat if they so choose, to create, edit and manage any documents that they may generate.

G.   Requesting helpdesk support

19.   Throughout the meetings, a dedicated team of information technology technicians will be available inside and outside the meeting rooms to provide support and assist participants with all their technical needs. In addition, users may request help through the link named "My Helpdesk"..

H.   Sharing documents between participants

20.   When two or more participants from separate delegations wish to work together on a document or share a document between them, any one of them can submit a request to the information technology support staff through the use of the helpdesk support system, indicating the names of participants or names of Parties that are to be included. A private shared workspace will be created that will only be visible and accessible to those users. The shared folder may be accessed through the link named "Shared Workspace".

II.   Further information and contact information

21.   For further information on the system, please visit the website http://www.qatarozone.com/ or contact the Ozone Secretariat at OzoneInfo@unep.org .

Annex

Questions and answers

Q. How do I get my laptop?

A. After registration please proceed to the information technology service desk with your badge and identification to collect a meeting laptop. Each participant will receive one laptop, which they will be required to return at the end of the meeting. Each participant will also receive a flash disk, which they will be able to take away at the end of the meeting.

Q. How do I obtain a password?

A. A username and password will be given to each participant at the information technology service desk when they collect the laptop. Please keep the username and password confidential.

Q. Can I use my own laptop?

A. Yes, but the conference laptops have been pre-configured to provide the required services and, unfortunately, new documents will not be downloaded automatically to your own laptop. The use of meeting laptops is highly recommended to gain access to the paperless workflow system, especially for those participants wishing to submit conference room papers.

If you decide to use your own laptop, please ensure that you bring your own power adaptor and that it is suitable for use in Qatar. You will still be required to proceed to the information technology service desk to collect your username and password.

Q. Can I access the paperless workflow system outside of the Sheraton conference venue?

A. No, but if you are using a meeting laptop, the distributed documents will automatically be downloaded to the laptop and you will be able to work on them wherever you are. In addition, you may download meeting documents on to the flash disk that you will be issued with upon registration.

Q. What should I do if I have technical problems?

A. While in the main meeting room, Al-Dafna Hall, please notify a member of the technical support team, who will be visible and easily identifiable. You may also proceed directly to the information technology service desk, which will be open from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. everyday.

Q. Will we be able to take the meeting laptops outside the meeting venue?

A. Yes, you will be responsible for the laptop for the duration of your stay or until you return it to the information technology service desk prior to your departure.

Q. Can everyone see the conference room papers?

A. Yes, every participant attending a particular meeting will be able to view the documents pertaining to that meeting.

Q. Can anyone submit a conference room paper?

A. No, only the designated person from each delegation will be able to submit a conference room paper.

Q. When can we view the online training material?

A. The guide to the paperless workflow solution is available from the following web address: http://www.qatarozone.com/.

Q. Will there be training sessions on location?

A. Scheduled demonstrations will be held from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on 15 November 2008 at the Sheraton and demonstrations will be given on the first morning of each meeting.

Q. How do I create a shared workspace?

A. By submitting a request via the helpdesk support link. Please view the online training manual for details of how to do this.

Q. How do I submit a conference room paper?

A. By accessing your delegation's "Documents" link. Please view the online training manual for details of how to do this.

Q. What if I lose my password?

A. Please make your way to the information technology service desk for assistance.

Q. What if I lose my laptop?

A. Please report this to the Secretariat and service desk to see if it has been handed in. If required, a police report will be filed.

If you have any other questions, please email them to: ozoneinfo@unep.org

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