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PRODUCTION OF GUIDES FOR THE WORKING PARTY ON INTERNATIONAL CONTRACT PRACTICES AND INDUSTRY (WP.5)

Note by the secretariat

During previous sessions of the Working Party, delegations have raised concerns over the time taken to publish Guides that have been approved by the legal experts. The following note is meant to inform the Working Party of progress in the publication of Guides and possible alternative means of disseminating the Guides and other material of the Working Party.

Use of the internet and the publication of Guides

The Guide entitled *Financing Private Enterprises and Trade: A Guide for the Transition Economies* is in its pre-publication version and will be published at the end of June 1996. The Guide on adapting property laws will be published in October 1996.

Once the text of a Guide has been approved by the Working Party, the text is made public at least one week after via the World Wide Web (WWW). The text of the *Financing* Guide is currently available on the Web and may be viewed (and if desired, printed) at the following World Wide Web address: http://www.unicc.org/unece/trade/policy/tp_home.htm under the heading *Privatization Guides*. In the near future, the texts of previously published Guides will also be made available through this medium. In order to view the electronic version of the *Financing* Guide, a user must first have access to a

computer with a connection to the World Wide Web and a copy of a Web browser software (such as *Netscape* or *Internet Explorer*). Once the browser software is running, a user should type the italicized address shown above into the browser's *Location* box (near the top of the browser screen) and press the return key on your computer keyboard. In a few moments, the user will be connected automatically to the homepage of the Trade Policy and Investment Promotion Section of the UN/ECE Trade Division. The complete text of the *Financing* Guide may be viewed by clicking the mouse cursor on the button showing the text *Privatization Guides*.

There are several benefits from the electronic distribution of documents. The paper production of documents takes time while the electronic medium can bring the document to a user instantaneously. It is worth noting that given the large and ever-increasing number of persons with access to the World Wide Web, the electronic versions of the Working Party's Guides currently have a larger audience and a broader reach than physical paper documents.

In light of the opportunities for disseminating the material of the Working Party which the new information technologies are providing, the secretariat raises the following questions for consideration by the legal experts:

- Should Guides or other documents produced by the Working Party be placed on the Internet even though they are still in draft form and still to be approved by the legal experts?
 - Should the Internet serve other purposes such as the dissemination of documents amongst WP.5 experts?
 - Should the Guides and other WP.5 documents be provided to national Governments for dissemination in their own electronic information systems?
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