POLICY GROUP

Secretariat Update on the CSLF Public Meeting Place
"PuMP," Formerly Called the Blog

Note by the Secretariat

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Background

At its meeting in Delhi, India, on 3 April 2006, the Secretariat presented its *Report on Mechanics and Feasibility of a "Blog."* A blog was described as a kind of electronic meeting place and Web site that can be used as a forum to post comments. The Secretariat recommended that a blog be implemented on a trial basis for six months. Consensus was received to proceed on that basis and the CSLF Blog was initiated in November 2006.

Action Requested

The Policy Group is requested to consider the measures the Secretariat has taken to update the CSLF Blog, now known as the CSLF Public Meeting Place (PuMP).

Conclusions

The Policy Group is invited to note in the Minutes of its 26 March 2007 meeting that: "The Secretariat updated the CSLF Policy Group on the Blog, now known as the CSLF Public Meeting Place (PuMP). The Policy Group accepted a recommended six-month extension of the trial period and will consider alternative uses of the PuMP for task forces or ad hoc meetings."

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The CSLF Policy Group directed the Secretariat to implement a blog, on a six-month trial basis to see if it was a beneficial tool to facilitate greater communication, both among stakeholders, and between stakeholders and the CSLF.

A blog, short for a "Web log", is a Web site that can be used to post new information along with comments and discussion about a particular topic or topics. Users can create new topics for discussion and everyone may post comments. All the comments are posted on the blog and can be viewed by the public. Blogs can be initiated by an individual or a group of contributors.

Visitors to a blog can either view postings as an anonymous user or sign in as a registered user. Anonymous users can only read comments and are not able to post their own comments. Users wishing to post comments must register. Registration is free. The user must select a user name and password. Once registered, a person may begin a new "thread" (i.e., start a new discussion topic) or reply to the comments of others. Comments are posted in real time without moderation, but are monitored on an ongoing basis.

The Secretariat initiated the blog and named it the CSLF public meeting place in early November 2006. Activity so far has been minimal. E-mails were sent to delegates and stakeholders notifying them that the PuMP was operational. It is believed to be too early to render a decision on its ultimate usefulness because it takes time for such specialized blogs to gain momentum. Six more months are needed to allow word of the PuMP's existence to spread, for stakeholders to become aware of this online tool, and thus visit the site more often to share their views and foster dialogue. It is believed that this tool can serve a useful purpose in facilitating communication and outreach and it needs more time to build a critical mass of users to be a benefit for CSLF members.

Additional Uses of the PuMP
The PuMP can be used for online task force or ad hoc group meetings. These meetings can be set up so that only individuals with access to a password can join and comment. Comments posted in special meetings would be viewable only by meeting participants. Also, general users would not be informed of these meetings. A closed discussion could be attractive for hosting online task forces or ad hoc meetings in which only pre-

determined members might participate. This could improve the ability of task force members to discuss issues more frequently and openly among themselves, given the difficulties in communicating across different time zones and adjusting for the work and travel schedules of task force members. Participant members could join the discussion from an Internet connection anywhere in the world or at any time of the day or night. Such online meetings could run for a pre-determined length of time, for example, three days, to allow members to join and rejoin based on their schedules or availability. The posts from on-line meetings could either be open to the public for viewing or remain closed to nonmembers, depending on group preferences.