

CREATE Meeting, New York, 7 March 2003

Consulate General of Finland, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 250

The Crisis Response Executive Advisory Team, CREATE, was established in the Seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology on 29 September – 1 October 2002 in Helsinki to support the Information Technology and Crisis Management (ITCM) Project and the Object Management Group's C4I Domain Task Force (OMG C4I). It aims to establish a more structured co-operation between international organisations and information and communication technology vendors in order to deliver interoperability solutions and standards suited to humanitarian emergencies and modern crisis response and management.

The first official meeting of the CREATE was organised in New York on 7 March 2003. The meeting was opened by President Ahtisaari, CMI and Dr Soley, OMG after which Under Secretary-General Guéhenno gave a keynote speech and Mr Jan Kubis, Secretary General of the OSCE, an address. The addresses were followed by ITCM and OMG C4I DTF progress reports on the work done since September 2002. The meeting was concluded with an open discussion. Below you find summaries of the speeches, presentations and discussions.

Keynote speech: Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, UN

Mr Guéhenno commended the organisers for gathering the meeting. He observed that as modernisation of warfare is so much on the agenda, it is timely also to speak about the modernisation of peacekeeping. Mr Guéhenno asserted that the goals of CREATE very much coincide with the IT needs of peacekeepers.

Mr Guéhenno commented on how the UN peacekeeping functions have changed dramatically in recent years. During the Cold War, peacekeeping missions were lightly armed, hierarchically structured and easy to deploy. The second-generation operations are a lot more complex, and thus their information technology needs are more demanding. The types and amount of information that needs management has grown exponentially. Mr Guéhenno drew an example from Congo: the headquarters are in Kinshasa, but most peacekeepers work in areas several hours away (by plane). There is communication via satellite between the HQ and the regions as well as between the HQ and New York. Videoconferences and the Internet are widely used.

Peace operations require systems that are interoperable, easy to use and deploy, secure and cost-effective. There has to be a balance between compatibility and interoperability on the one hand and the need not to make the system too centralised on the other. A knowledge management system especially needs shared best practices, the knowledge from lessons learned and an institutional memory. Planning for peace operations also requires synthesising different kinds of information. One useful addition would be capability for modelling when planning for peacekeeping operations ("peace games"), which does not exist at the moment.

According to Mr Guéhenno, the UN has only just begun to explore the benefits of technology, but some useful new things are already in place. The UN does not have the ability to purchase new gadgets every time new technology is developed. Dialogue about what the UN needs and what the IT vendors can offer is important

Address: Jan Kubis, Secretary-General, OSCE

The OSCE is also trying to resolve internal interoperability. The organisation is carrying out a comprehensive reform of the managerial and informational system. It is understood that there is a need to change the work processes and management practices before establishing the technology to be used in these processes.

Mr Kubis admitted that an organisation of 4000 persons cannot influence the standardisation process. There have been failures in the past in trying to create own technology solutions. For the OSCE, the way forward is off-the-shelf products. Mr Kubis took up the Lego blocks as an example: from existing building blocks you can build whatever you want with a little skill and creativity.

Discussion

After the presentations Robert C. Williamson asked the speakers about outsourcing technology. Mr Guéhenno considered outsourcing a difficult question, especially because political considerations come into play. In the OSCE all major decisions, not only political but also managerial, are taken unanimously, explained Mr Kubis. There is also an unfortunate tradition of micromanagement from the participating states' part. The question of outsourcing was discussed when adopting the management agenda and resulted in the decision to outsource to the private sector when possible.

Diego A. Ruiz Palmer took up the issue of lessons learned. His experience from NATO was that there usually is not enough time to absorb the lessons learned from operations or practises. There is also an ineffective way of doing business in NATO communications: for example in Kosovo the lead nation changes every six months and a new lead nation always brings its own technology.

Presentation of the progress in OMG C4I work programme: Sheldon Sutton, Mitre

Mr Sutton presented the work done and work plans for the C4I Domain Task Force. A C4I roadmap was published in September 2001. The roadmap identified six focus areas for the task force: shared operational picture, computer and communications infrastructure, computer supported cooperative work, sensors, modelling and simulation, as well as support and sustainment. Of these six, the task force is currently and during the next year concentrating on three: shared operational picture, computer and communications infrastructure, and sensors.

OMG has thus far mainly operated with military actors. Mr Sutton expects CREATE to expand the horizon to civilian organisations. CREATE should emphasise the issues that are common to different actors; the kinds of data are similar whether it is a military, peacekeeping or other crisis management operation in different phases. Mr Sutton especially hoped that CREATE could take on two roles with respect to the activities of the OMG C4I work programme. The first role is that of a reviewer of the C4I DTF programme and individual elements of the programme where a more detailed view is needed or where there is a particular interest. The second role would be an advocate of the C4I. Members of CREATE are hoped to inform members of their communities about the activities and plans of the C4I work programme.

Presentation of the progress in the ITCM project: CMO concept: Jorma Hämäläinen, Sonera

Mr Hämäläinen presented the work done by an expert working group on International Crisis Management Telecommunications Network Operator (CMO) as part of the ITCM project. The CMO concept encompasses both co-operational development and command line development. CMO is a concept for a telecommunications operator providing a communications and data transmission solution for the international organisations in crisis areas. CMO is a facilitator to other layers, such as databases etc. The CMO core solution is based on professional mobile radio network (for example TETRA). Mr Hämäläinen noted the Finnish Government's intention to look for the possibility to finance the pilot phase of the network operator.

Presentation of the progress in the ITCM project: C4I system integration: Risto Ojanperä, Secwell and Ari Rahkonen, IBM

Mr Ojanperä and Mr Rahkonen presented the work done thus far in the C4I system integration in the ITCM project. The system developed is a web-based communication, cooperation and management solution, which will be based on open, commercially available components. Every crisis management organisation can construct its own interoperable system by including or excluding components. The system will be multichannel, i.e. it will work in PC's, mobile handsets, vehicle based equipments etc.

There are not only technical, but also human challenges in finding common understanding for working practises. One of the most central challenges in trying to make systems more interoperable is security/authentication, noted Mr Ojanperä. The ITCM system will allow for firm access control for different user groups. By securing all communications it ensures that each

organisation involved in the information exchange retains full control of their own data. Mr Rahkonen reminded the representatives of international organisations, that the organisations have to first agree on what information to share, and after that technology comes in.

The requirements identified for ITCM are that it improves interoperability; it must operate in pervasive environments; it has to be secure, open and scalable, easy to deploy and use; it should be based on commercial offerings; and have world wide support. The portal design allows for a single point of access to all resources and a personalised interaction with the portal services. Mr Rahkonen also presented a useful item to help interoperability: multilanguage support and instant messaging with translation services.

Mr Ojanperä and Mr Rahkonen concluded that the ITCM project is now ready to deploy and further develop a decision-making support and knowledge management solution with close cooperation with the crisis management organisations.

Presentation of the progress in the ITCM project: Research project: David Stewart Howitt

What is the environment this technical solution is supposed to work in? Every crisis is always different, so it is not useful to try to overlay templates, but best practices can be found and lessons learned can be evaluated. For this purpose, Mr Stewart Howitt presented the proposed research project, which has been planned to be included in the ITCM project. The research will analyse three different cases: an immediate crisis (possibly Iraq), a conflict/immediate post-conflict (Afghanistan) and a stabilising crisis (Sierra Leone). A case study approach will provide a reality check for the ITCM project and test the applicability of the technology developed thus far. The output of the research project would be collective user requirements.

Mr Stewart Howitt also raised the question about the beneficiaries of the successful deployment of the ITCM project. Are they the international organisations, the NGOs, or rather more broadly the building of peace and alleviation of crisis and thus the local community in the crisis areas?

Discussion

Dr Soley referred to Mr Stewart-Howitt's address by noting that the aim of the research project should examine whether the standards developed by the OMG C4I Task Force implemented in the ITCM platform will actually solve the problems that they are intended to solve.

Mr Ruiz Palmer commented on the terminology used. It is important to define what terminology one uses, for example 'technology' and 'interoperability' are not as clear as one would think. According to Mr Ruiz Palmer, technology is a push function (of vendors) and interoperability is a pull function (of user requirements). Mr Sutton added that technology is an enabler; it always takes people to achieve interoperability.

There was also discussion about the benefits of a bottom-up or a top-down approach. Mr Ruiz Palmer mentioned NATO as an example of a bottom-up approach. Because there is no NATO interoperability from the top, different units are doing it in the battalion level, because they anyway have to make it happen somehow. Dr Soley asked whether the attempt for interoperability could be a bottom-up process. According to Tom Richardson it cannot. Mr Richardson said it needs to be a top-down process, but for it to be useful, there is a need to focus on the level where interoperability is most needed.