Improving Performance and Efficiency

Highlights in 2013

Further development and consolidation of the QMS
Enhancement of PRTool and refinement of KPIs
Evaluation of BUE III and preparations for the evaluation of the IFE in 2014

Throughout the process of establishing the verification system, the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission aims for effectiveness, efficiency and continual improvement through the implementation of its Quality Management System (QMS). This system is focused on customers, such as States Signatories and National Data Centres, and aims at fulfilling the responsibilities of the Commission in establishing the CTBT verification regime in compliance with the requirements set forth in the Treaty, its Protocol and relevant documents of the Commission.
Quality Management System

The main purpose of the QMS is to ensure continuous provision of high quality products and services. The QMS is a ‘living system’ that can be adjusted, in keeping with the emphasis placed by the organization on customer needs and continual improvement.

Within the framework of continual development of the QMS system, efforts focused on completing a procedure for controlling and coding QMS documents. The procedure implements a workflow for the reviewing and approval processes in the QMS document management system and defines the main roles and responsibilities. The procedure also establishes the convention for coding documents.

Following discussions with the representatives of States Signatories, the PTS compiled a glossary of terms pertaining to the QMS. One of the benefits of having such a glossary is that it provides the organization with the capability to create, manage and share a common vocabulary as an aid to ensuring the quality of outputs, products and services. This fosters cross-functional alignment and helps all parts of the organization to better understand the context and usage of terms.

The glossary contains all terms appearing in the latest versions of the draft International Monitoring System Operational Manual, the draft International Data Centre Operational Manual and the Model Text for the draft On-Site Inspection Operational Manual as revised to reflect discussions in sessions of Working Group B. This compilation will need to be updated periodically as the QMS documentation is developed further.
Performance Reporting Tool

One of the functions of the QMS is to identify and put into effect key performance indicators (KPIs) for evaluating PTS processes and products, thus facilitating management review and continual improvement. KPIs are parameters used to quantify the performance of the processes of an organization. They are primarily employed to assess progress in reaching objectives and to supply quantitative information for prescribing a course of action. The aim of the QMS is to support the objective of consistently meeting verification system requirements, and it encompasses all contributing PTS processes and work products.

The PTS continued to work towards full operationalization of the performance reporting tool (PRTool). A new version of PRTool (version 1.9.4) was released in November and is accessible on the secure web portal of the PTS. Substantive progress was achieved in strengthening the common information technology platform, not only by improving its internal architecture, but also by further revising the common graphics user interface, improving system flexibility and security. The implementation of PRTool was enriched by a role based functionality, allowing tailored displays based on the role of the user.

The new elements of PRTool functionality include the first set of new data availability KPIs based on the agreed definitions. The capabilities of PRTool were strengthened in areas such as advanced grouping/filtering features. Improvements suggested by an independent review of PRTool to achieve full compatibility with the draft Operational Manuals are being progressively implemented.

PRTool continues to set ambitious standards of transparency and accountability, as it allows States Signatories to monitor programme implementation by the PTS with the possibility of going back to any given
year and making a judgement on the value gained for the resources invested.

**Evaluating On-Site Inspection Activities**

The evaluation of on-site inspection (OSI) activities remains the key current evaluation activity. Activities in this regard continued to focus on preparations for the Integrated Field Exercise (IFE) in 2014 and specifically on the third and final part of that process and the building of OSI operational capability, i.e. build-up exercise (BUE) III, which was conducted in May/June in Hungary. BUE III was devoted to practising the actual inspection phase of an OSI. Preparations for the evaluation of the IFE in 2014 also continued, especially during the second half of the year.

The concept for the comprehensive evaluation of the next IFE as well as the three BUEs is clearly set out in a rolling draft blueprint. The blueprint was continually developed and refined on the basis of experience gained during its implementation during each BUE.

The blueprint sets out two different approaches in order to reflect the two distinct purposes of the BUEs and the subsequent IFE. Since the BUEs are viewed as ‘dress rehearsals’ for the IFE, through which progress can be assessed and capability built, the evaluation of the BUEs took a ‘formative’ approach in order to help shape and ‘form’ the operational capability being exercised. This was achieved by providing short-looped feedback while the OSI activities were being exercised and at the end of activities each day, as well as a comprehensive internal written report. Unlike the BUEs, the IFE is regarded as a test vehicle for assessing the current level of operational capability. Therefore the evaluation of the IFE will take a ‘summative’, hands-off approach in order to ‘sum up’ the capability demonstrated during the exercise.

Work advanced on schedule to update the draft blueprint to reflect this intended change of method. Moreover, the requirement to continually update the evaluation process, which is a central pillar of the rolling blueprint concept, extends to learning and applying the lessons learned from evaluating all three BUEs. At the practical implementation level, most of these lessons concern the need to better define what is being targeted by the evaluation and, secondly, how information about those targets is then gathered and used to make the assessment.

Work continued to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation team and the process as a whole by developing better target definitions and new software tools that will replace the existing paper based toolsets, in order to automate the collection of observations in the field, the association of key findings and the derivation of summary conclusions, all in a consistent, evidence based approach.