



Internal Oversight Division

Reference: IOD-INV-2020-07

Management Implication Report

August 25, 2020

1. The Internal Oversight Division (IOD) of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) recently found that WIPO contract award data had not been reflected properly in the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) website, with several awards issued pursuant to formal solicitation processes missing. IOD further learnt that there had been queries from a number of vendors to WIPO requisitioning offices in this relation.

FACTS

2. UNGM is a global procurement portal shared by offices/agencies of the United Nations (UN) system. It provides companies with a single point of entry to the UN procurement market, allowing them to register on the vendor database and to track upcoming tender notices. It also provides UN offices/agencies with access to a common database for vendor sourcing and facilitates the shortlisting of suppliers for competitive bidding.

3. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/246 (March 2007), a foundational document for the UNGM, included a request to the Secretary General “to ensure that the United Nations Global Marketplace website, *inter alia*, feature[d] lists of companies registered as vendors of the United Nations system entities, as well as statistics on contract awards, acquisition plans and procurement notices”¹. In September 2009, the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Procurement Network stated in CEB/2009/HLCM_PN/6 that the majority of UN agencies had an obligation to publish contract awards and that an agreement had been reached that contract awards would be displayed in UNGM to enhance the transparency of the UN procurement system, as well as providing as much information as possible to potential suppliers². Accordingly, the UNGM website has come to include a searchable database of tender notices and contract awards issued pursuant to formal solicitation methods by different UN agencies³.

4. The functionality for UN agencies to upload contract award data onto UNGM was implemented in June 2007. Any contract award that has been uploaded by a UN agency at any time since then should normally be available on UNGM, including past/inactive awards.

5. WIPO has integrated its e-procurement system, *In-Tend*⁴, with UNGM, which has enabled:

(a) Data of vendors registered in UNGM to be automatically reflected in WIPO’s vendor roster within *In-Tend*;

(b) Procurement notices to be automatically posted on UNGM, where potential vendors (that are registered with WIPO) are able to express interest to the notices directly through UNGM; and

¹ <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/61/246>.

² https://www.unsystem.org/CEBPublicFiles/Content/Reports/REP_PN_200909_CEB2009HLCM_PN6.pdf).

³ See UNGM website (available at ungm.org). Note also, e.g., UNCHR states on its website that it posts on UNGM “all contract awards resulting from a formal solicitation process” and that “a request for contract award information not posted on UNGM requires a specific request to” a designated e-mail Supply Management Service (SMS) address (available at <https://www.unhcr.org/contract-awards.html>). ITU’s website also indicates that, “in order to underpin the principle of transparency, ITU publishes on UNGM the information relative to contracts awarded based on open competition” and that “bidders may request information about the assessment of their offers in writing” to a designated e-mail address (available at <https://www.itu.int/en/procurement/Pages/default.aspx>). UNFPA informs suppliers that all contract awards issued pursuant to open tender processes are posted in UNGM (available at <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/unfpa-supplier-Infographic.pdf>).

⁴ *In-Tend Ltd*. Is a British company that provides Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) e-procurement solutions.

(c) Expressions of interest (EOI) to be automatically brought from the UNGM to WIPO's *In-Tend*.

6. However, the contract award upload process for WIPO is still manual, in that the procurement/contract officer needs to upload the award data by filling out the required electronic forms in UNGM – including vendor, beneficiary country, contract award date/amount/description and the agency contact information.

7. More generally, there is not yet any function for automated posting of procurement award data to UNGM for any of the 14 UN agencies using the *In-Tend* system. This is due to the *In-Tend Ltd.* software company not yet having implemented the contract award WebAPI⁵, despite multiple requests from UNGM and the agencies using the system.

ISSUES

8. UNGM is the central registration/tender tool and procurement database utilized by UN offices/agencies and vendors. Ensuring that information contained therein is accurate and up-to-date is important in safeguarding WIPO's reputation and ensuring public trust in the transparency and fairness of its procurement system. Currently, there is no automated posting of WIPO contract award data to UNGM in place, leading to a risk that contract awards issued pursuant to formal solicitation processes being omitted from the database.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Accordingly, IOD recommends the following:

Recommendation

1. The Procurement and Travel Division (PTD) should consider implementing automated processes to ensure that WIPO contract awards issued pursuant to formal solicitation processes are systematically reflected and updated in the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM).

(Importance: High)

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⁵ An API (Application Programming Interface) is a computing interface that defines interactions between software intermediaries. A *WebAPI* is an API for either a web server or web browser. The term "API" is generally used nowadays to refer to *WebAPIs*. APIs can be used to link any system with UNGM; therefore, if an agency uses a system other than *In-Tend* for contract award and management, it may develop an interface with UNGM through the API to automate the posting of awards. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which does not use *In-Tend*, is currently the only UN agency that has implemented such API, allowing for its contract award data to be automatically reflected in UNGM.

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Recommendation	Responsible unit/manager	Deadline for implementation	Management comment and action plan
1	<p>The Procurement and Travel Division (PTD) should consider implementing automated processes to ensure that WIPO contract awards issued pursuant to formal solicitation processes are systematically reflected and updated in the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM).</p> <p>Importance: High</p>	Procurement and Travel Division, Director	December 2020	<p>PTD notes the obligation in paragraph 14.2.2 of the Procurement Manual that an award notice be published upon receipt of the acceptance of the award by the selected supplier. Currently, the internal process to request signature of a contract requires the PS buyer to confirm the publication of the award on UNGM. Accordingly a systematic control is already in place.</p> <p>In addition, Procurement Section will issue a new tender in Q2 2020 for an e-tendering tool to replace the current In-Tend contract. It will be a requirement in that tender that an Open API be included to ensure a full integration with UNGM, including the publication of the award to the technically feasible extent at reasonable case. We may then be moving from a “systematic” approach to an “automated” approach.</p>