

“The Y2K Issue and Implications for Future International Cooperation on Information Infrastructure Security”

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Abstract

This paper will first assess the steps undertaken by governments, industry and international organisations to deal with the Year 2000 (Y2K) issue. It was a technical problem readily understood but involved complex interdependencies that had potential for adverse consequences on a large scale. The second part of the paper will examine the unprecedented levels of international cooperation undertaken during Y2K remediation and analyze the potential for application to other information technology problems. Of particular interest are those issues related to the security of information networks and critical infrastructure. As IT systems become ever more widespread, promoting good business practices and standards globally might only be successful with high levels of international cooperation.

Governments, industry, and international organisations (eg, UN, ICAO, IAEA, ITU) cooperated to both deal with Y2K and monitor the rollover despite having quite different motivations and requirements. Such cooperation took place despite tense political circumstances (e.g., the conflicts in Kosovo and Kashmir), which otherwise might have made such a high level of cooperation impossible.

This paper will also examine how the differing levels of computer dependency and quality of service in various countries affected Y2K remediation. This will be analyzed from the perspective of advanced western countries, developing countries, and the least developed countries. Finally, the paper will discuss which factors are likely to contribute to dealing with future IT issues with a widespread impact, such as protection of information networks and critical infrastructure, in an increasingly interdependent global economic environment.