Activity Report of the Common Thread Network

October 2016 – September 2017

Introduction

1. This report provides a summary of the Common Thread Network ("CTN") activities for the period between October 2016 and September 2017. It was prepared by the Secretariat of the CTN and was adopted by the co-chairs and members of the CTN during the 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Network.

2. This report was prepared pursuant to Article 7.1 of the Terms of Reference.

3. At the time of the report, the CTN gathered 16 Full Members and 6 Observer members.
   a. Full members are data protection and privacy authorities from Australia, The Bahamas, British Columbia (Canada), Canada (Federal), the Channel Islands, Ghana, Gibraltar, Isle of Man, Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Nova Scotia (Canada), South Africa, United Kingdom, Province of Victoria (Australia), Yukon (Canada)
   b. Observer members are Bermuda, Cayman Islands, India, The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

4. During the reporting period, the CTN was chaired by two co-chairs:
   - Elizabeth Denham (United Kingdom - ICO)
   - Daniel Therrien (Canada - OPC)

5. The United Kingdom fulfils the role and tasks of CTN Secretariat.
Activities

6. The activities of the CTN during the reporting period are divided in four categories: network activities, outreach, developing partnerships, and communications.

A. Network activities

7. The CTN held its 2016 Annual General Meeting in October 2016, in the margins of the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners. During that meeting, members adopted the CTN’s Terms of Reference. The meeting also marked the official launch of the CTN’s website.

8. During the reporting period, the co-chairs convened three Quarterly conference calls with members of the network. The calls took place on 20 January 2017, 9 May 2017 and 24 July 2017.

Change of co-chair

9. After three years at the helm of the Network, Daniel Therrien, Canada Privacy Commissioner, stepped down from his role as co-chair of the CTN at the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

10. At the same meeting, Ms Patricia Poku, Executive Director of the Data Protection Commission of Ghana, was appointed as new co-chair for a term of three years. Her term started immediately.

Joint initiatives

11. On Data Privacy Day (28 January 2017), the CTN published a joint statement signed by 10 members detailing each member’s activities and initiatives as part of this global event¹.

Working Group on pillars

12. In May 2017, the CTN set up a new Working Group to develop common themes of work which the CTN should focus on in order to raise its collective expertise. The Working Group also aims at putting forward achievable outputs that will be of benefit to current and potential members, to the Network and to external stakeholders.

¹ https://commonthreadnetwork.org/statement20170126/
13. The Working Group reported back on its activities to the membership at the 2017 Annual General Meeting. It received mandate to continue its work during the next reporting period.

B. Outreach

14. During the reporting period, two new members joined the Network. South Africa joined as a full member and Sierra Leone joined as an observer.

15. As part of the CTN’s active outreach strategy, the Secretariat sent invitation letters to relevant data protection and privacy authorities, or, in absence of these in certain Commonwealth territories, to the relevant Departments and Ministries. While the Secretariat noted that the response had being fairly limited, the increased importance and visibility of privacy and data protection issues meant that it would continue its efforts to engage with authorities and ministries.

C. Developing partnerships

Participation in external events

16. The CTN was invited to participate in the second Data Protection Conference organised by the Data Protection Commission of Ghana. The event took place in Accra on 19 and 20 March 2017. Using the opportunity of the conference, the CTN held a closed session with the African members of the Network.

17. The same month, the CTN also participated in the Commonwealth Cybersecurity Forum 2017, hosted in London by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO).

Global Privacy Enforcement Network

18. The CTN is a member of the Network of Networks initiative of the Global Privacy Enforcement Network (GPEN). This initiative aims at facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices across the various networks which compose the global privacy ecosystem. In particular, the Network of Networks promotes better cross-border enforcement cooperation through dialogue among relevant networks of privacy enforcement authorities as well as with authorities from other sectors which have a marked interest for the respect to privacy and data protection.
19. The CTN took part in the inaugural calls of the Network of Networks where it detailed the CTN activities and programme of work. The Data Protection Office of Mauritius serves as liaison between the CTN and the Network of Networks.

Commonwealth Secretariat

20. As part of its efforts to reach out to, and potentially develop relationships with, new authorities and relevant Departments in the Commonwealth, the CTN was pleased to open a line of communication during the reporting period with the Rule of Law, Human Rights, Public Sector Governance and Political Affairs Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

21. The CTN is keen to continue its active engagement with the Commonwealth Secretariat during the next reporting period in an effort to develop common themes of work, notably as the Commonwealth Secretariat prepares for the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London in April 2018.

D. Communications

22. The CTN launched its website in October 2016, during the Annual General Meeting. The website address is [www.commonthreadnetwork.org](http://www.commonthreadnetwork.org).

23. A network of website representatives was set up after the launch to ensure that the content of the website stays fresh and up-to-date. Administration of the website is part of the Secretariat’s tasks.

The Secretariat