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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONTROLLING A LIFECYCLE OF AN ELECTRONIC CONTRACT

(57) Abstract: Managing the lifecycle of an electronic contract representing a relationship between at least two parties sharing a business process includes exchanging public keys for each of the parties, negotiating the electronic contract, digitally signing and verifying the electronic contract, issuing role certificates to participants of the shared business process, the role certificates defining authorization of participants to perform at least a part of the shared business process and for using the public keys, registering, by the participants, to receive the electronic contract, distributing the electronic contract to the participants, and performing the shared business process by the participants. Updating the shared business process may be accomplished by modifying the electronic contract and redistributing the electronic contract to the participants. Terminating the electronic contract may be accomplished by modifying the electronic contract to halt authorization of the shared business process and redistributing the electronic contract to the parties.