

## **2<sup>nd</sup> preparatory meeting for the General Assembly's overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**

**20-22 October 2015**

### **Informal summary by the Secretariat**

The second informal meeting of the plenary, as part of the intergovernmental preparatory process for the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), took place from 20 to 22 October 2015. As was the case with the first preparatory meeting held on 1 July 2015, it was organized by the Co-Facilitators of the overall review process, H.E. Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, and H.E. Jánis Mažeiks, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia to the United Nations. The second preparatory meeting was preceded by informal interactive consultations with stakeholders convened by the President of the General Assembly on 19 October 2015.

The Co-Facilitators recalled the roadmap for the review process and the objective to produce a consensus-based outcome document for review and adoption at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 15 and 16 December 2015. A zero draft of the outcome document was prepared taking into account the many written and oral comments received on the non-paper released in early September. Noting that there were many points of agreement, there were also some differences of opinion in some areas. The purpose of the second preparatory meeting was to hear the views of Member States on the zero draft and try to reach consensus on the way forward on critical issues.

The Co-Facilitators opened the floor by asking what Member States considered to have been the main achievements and challenges in the implementation of WSIS outcomes, what they see as the priorities going forward, and how future reviews should be organized. Subsequent interactive discussions focussed on questions of ICT for development, Internet governance, human rights and building confidence in the security and use of ICT. There was general agreement that the zero draft offered a good basis for discussion of progress, gaps and areas for continued focus, as well as challenges, as envisaged by the modalities resolution.<sup>1</sup>

Statements and remarks were made by the delegations from South Africa (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), the European Union, Maldives (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States), Ecuador (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Algeria, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liberia, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States of America.

Delegations stressed their continuing commitment to the WSIS vision of a people-centred inclusive and development-oriented society premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and for further

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/302

implementation consistent with of WSIS outcomes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda were recognized as landmark agreements that should be highlighted. The 2030 Agenda both underscored the critical role of science, technology and innovation in the pursuit of sustainable development, and specifically identified ICT as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Delegations emphasized that dramatic progress had been made in realizing the goals of WSIS and that these achievements should be further stressed in the outcome document. The contribution that all stakeholders had made in this regard should be acknowledged. Delegations noted that, alongside impressive achievements, there remained critical digital divides and both should be given due recognition.

Some delegations commented that the outcome document should be specific, concise and action-oriented to the extent possible. In addition to serving as a political declaration, the outcome document should be evidence-based, drawing on relevant technical analysis and agreements.

### **ICT for development**

Delegations concurred that ICT was not an end in itself but an enabler of development in all areas. A number of delegations expressed satisfaction that the zero draft drew attention to the important and growing role of the digital economy as part of global economy, and to the social and environmental benefits of ICT. Some delegations called for strengthening of the text on environment, recalling the relationship between ICT and climate change, and the role it can play in tackling environmental challenges.

Many delegations stressed that further WSIS follow-up should be linked to the 2030 Agenda commitments to advance poverty eradication, education, health and epidemic response, employment, water, energy, urban management, climate change, disaster management, peaceful societies, effective institutions, and other objectives. Delegations called for aligning the WSIS Action Lines with the SDGs, as shown for example in a mapping produced by ITU.<sup>2</sup> Target 9.c on access and affordability of the Internet in LDCs provided a specific reference point.

### **Bridging the digital divide**

Delegations underscored that billions of people are still not benefiting from ICT and that connecting everyone, everywhere was a crucial challenge that should be acknowledged with particular attention to women, persons with disabilities migrants, persons in conflict situations and other vulnerable groups. Many delegations emphasized that bridging the digital divide, between developed and developing countries, and between women and men, should be a priority while recognizing that the nature of the digital divide was changing.

Delegations also commented that the digital divide was not monolithic and comprised many aspects. There were different experiences in different regions and countries. The outcome document should reflect such differences, including in the presentation of data, as appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg/Content/wsis-sdg\\_matrix\\_document.pdf](http://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg/Content/wsis-sdg_matrix_document.pdf)

*Access* was an important factor and in that regard new technologies such as broadband, mobile cellular networks and cloud computing had accelerated progress towards development goals. A number of delegations called for expanded broadband connectivity as a priority, and others to a commitment to technology adaptation.

*Affordability* – Delegations stressed that it was essential to address affordability of ICT, particularly the cost of broadband in developing countries. The work of the Alliance for Affordable Internet could be noted in this respect.

*Linguistic and cultural diversity* – The creation, use and preservation of local content was another area calling for attention. A number of delegations called for recognition of respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and suggested a commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage in the creation, diffusion and use of ICT.

*Digital literacy* – A number of delegations underscored that the capabilities of people to use ICT was pivotal so that all people everywhere would have substantive equality of opportunity to benefit from and participate in the Information Society.

*ICT knowledge and skills* – A number of delegations emphasized that there should be a commitment to strengthening capacities and capabilities in the ICT sector of developing countries, for example through training, joint research and development and public-private partnership with universities.

*Gender divide* – Delegations stressed that particular attention should be given to achieving gender equality and the full participation of women in all aspects of the Information Society.

*Net neutrality* – Some delegations commented that net neutrality was a foundation of open, affordable access for all and should be upheld. What it is and what needs to be done called for close attention. The uniform distribution of critical Internet resources such as the Internet address space could also be considered.

*Capacity-building* – Many delegations stressed that global cooperation for capacity-building needed to be considered in the outcome document, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, in the form of knowledge-sharing, training and technology transfer, regional hubs and partnerships. Capacity-building to bridge the digital divide was of particular concern to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

One delegation commented that the Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT for Development, adopted at ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 2014 and focussing on growth, inclusiveness, sustainability, innovation and partnership, provided a useful framework of goals and targets for access and connectivity.<sup>3</sup>

### **Enabling environment**

Delegations welcomed the inclusion of text on the enabling environment in the zero draft, and recalled that public policymaking was a responsibility of government to be undertaken in consultation with all stakeholders in an inclusive and transparent manner.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itu.int/en/connect2020/PublishingImages/Pages/default/Connect-2020.pdf>

Delegations commented that there were many policies that were conducive to promotion of ICT for development, as well as to science, technology and innovation, including open access to data, the free flow of information, open government, and a commitment to corporate social responsibility on the part of the private sector. One delegation proposed an international charter on open data. Well-functioning regulatory and legal systems for private sector investment, national broadband strategies, and the efficient allocation of telecommunication spectrums had all accelerated ICT access and improved affordability and should be further encouraged.

### **Financial mechanisms**

A number of delegations underscored the urgent need for financial mechanisms to bridge the digital divide, integrated with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, inter alia through the recently enabled technology facilitation mechanism. One delegation proposed a commitment to renew the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) agreed at Tunis. Others recalled that the DSF was based on voluntary contributions, had had few donors as well as a number of questions about its operational efficiency, and had not been found successful.

There was recognition that in many countries ICT investment is private sector driven and that this should be reflected in the outcome document. Working with the private sector to guide investments towards desired outcomes, including through infrastructure-sharing models and other forms of PPP should be considered.

### **Internet governance**

Some delegations proposed that the Internet be recognized as a global public good subject to principles of the rule of law and good governance. The applicability of international law should be recognized, including respect for the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. Some delegations called for a reaffirmation of paragraph 46 of the Tunis Agenda urging States to refrain from unilateral measures not compatible with international law.

Many delegations emphasized that Internet governance should follow the principles of openness, transparency and inclusiveness agreed at Tunis, and supported a reiteration of the working definition of Internet governance contained in paragraph 34 of the Tunis Agenda. A number of delegations commented that the open, inclusive and distributed nature of the Internet should continue to be reflected in a flexible governance structure, and noted that there were a variety of Internet governance models and multiple concurrent governance processes.

Many delegations stressed that there must continue to be a role for all stakeholders in accordance with their roles and responsibilities as set out in the Tunis Agenda. No one stakeholder group could achieve its aims in isolation. Multi-stakeholder collaboration over the last ten years had been essential in assuring the growth and evolution of Internet.

A number of delegations suggested that consideration should be given to what is needed for all governments to play their role in Internet-related public policy-making in an inclusive manner. The outcome document should call for accelerated efforts to strengthen meaningful and substantive participation of developing countries in Internet governance.

Some suggested acknowledging the NetMundial Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance and its nonbinding outcome on Internet governance principles and roadmap for the future evolution of the Internet ecosystem.<sup>4</sup>

Some delegations recalled that the convening of the Internet Governance Forum and the process towards enhanced cooperation were two distinct processes that may be complementary. Some delegations called for the United Nations to play a greater role in Internet governance.

### **Internet Governance Forum**

Many delegations emphasized that the IGF had demonstrated its value as an open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder initiative and were favourable to an extension of its mandate. Continuation for ten years would have practical advantages for donors and participants in terms of planning and funding, and seemed to have broad support. Continuation for fifteen years was also suggested to align with 2030 Agenda, as was five years in connection with proposed WSIS reviews.

Delegations underscored at the same time a need for implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, which relate to Forum outcomes, working modalities, funding, participation, and linkages to other Internet governance-related entities.<sup>5</sup>

### **Enhanced cooperation**

Some delegations commented that enhanced cooperation is a multifaceted process that needs to continue and involve all stakeholders. The CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation had identified many Internet governance issues and mechanisms where cooperation was taking place and being enhanced, as well as policy gaps, which could be acknowledged and taken into account in the overall WSIS review.<sup>6</sup>

Referring to paragraph 69 of the Tunis Agenda, a number of delegations emphasized that ten years of experience with the process towards enhanced cooperation had shown that more needed to be done to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international Internet-related policymaking.

Some delegations referred to proposals for an international legal framework on Internet governance. It was unclear to others what issue was to be addressed with a legal framework who recalled that a related initiative at the ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications in 2012 did not enjoy consensus. Internet governance involved many different issues calling for diverse responses. The internationalization of ICANN was one such response. One delegation suggested that enhanced cooperation was a matter of national security.

### **Human rights**

Many delegations welcomed inclusion of human rights in the overall review and in particular reaffirmation that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including

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<sup>4</sup> <http://netmundial.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NETmundial-Multistakeholder-Document.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1, noted in GA resolution 67/195, para. 18

<sup>6</sup> E/CN.16/2015/CRP.2, [http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162015crp2\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162015crp2_en.pdf)

the right to privacy.<sup>7</sup> Some delegations also welcomed reaffirmation of the commitment of WSIS outcome documents to the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights.

Some delegations suggested that text on human rights should properly address Geneva Action Lines C3, C7, C8, C9 and C10, all of which are linked to human rights, and commented by way of example that blocking the Internet hampers economic development.

A number of delegations underscored the negative consequences of online censorship, website blocking, fear of attack, threats to journalists, bloggers and whistle-blowers, illegal and extraterritorial monitoring, and called for commitments to protect media freedom and ensure safety of online journalists, bloggers and human rights activists, as well as protection of freedom of expression of religion and belief, where the overall review could draw on the language of the UNESCO high-level event outcome.<sup>8</sup> Others recalled that freedom of expression was not absolute and was subject to certain limitations.

Delegations underscored that human rights applied throughout, and there was a need strong and clear language on the subject. There were differences of opinion on the placement of human rights in the outcome document, however, whether in the preamble, under ICT for development, as a separate section and/or mainstreamed throughout text.

#### **Building confidence in the security and use of ICTs**

Delegations stressed that security challenges had evolved in terms of quality and technical complexity in the last ten years and that it would be important to keep pace with the times. They had also become more nuanced. Cyber-crimes were different from potential cyber-attacks by one Member State against another, for example, calling for different responses and different expertise.

Delegations noted there had been tremendous technological advances of benefit to sustainable development. At the same time, caution was warranted in the adoption of innovative high-end technologies that might be used for malicious purposes. Safety in cyberspace called for attention, in particular to protect children online, ensure a safe, peaceful environment, prevent illegal use of personal information, and limit the spread of hatred. Delegations noted that malicious activities online were growing exponentially. Critical infrastructure and information must be protected and cyber resilience should be strengthened.

Delegations supported acknowledgement of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime as a valuable tool to the extent that it applied, alongside the work of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group on Cybercrime, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise and others. Many delegations underlined the need to tackle cybercrime through international cooperation.

Many delegations noted that capacity-building in the area of cybersecurity was key and should continue to be supported, inter alia in the form of information sharing, technology transfer,

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<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/167

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[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS\\_10\\_Event/wsis10\\_final\\_state ment\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS_10_Event/wsis10_final_state ment_en.pdf)

cooperation on standards, education of citizens, and cyber incidence response teams and PPPs. Both regional and global approaches should be considered. The work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security could be noted.

Many delegations noted cybercrime and cybersecurity were areas where enhanced cooperation should be pursued with a leading role for government in collaboration with all stakeholders. Some delegations suggested elaboration of a global convention on cybersecurity while others noted that the challenges involved in building confidence in the security and use of ICTs were multifaceted and immediate.

A number of delegations questioned whether WSIS was the right platform to consider cybercrime and cybersecurity to such an extent given that these matters were being addressed elsewhere. Others were of the view that security was a cross-cutting issue and enabler of development. A people-centred inclusive information society could not be realized without an open, peaceful, and inclusive cyberspace.

Some delegations suggested moving the text on security to the section on ICT for development in keeping with the Geneva Action Lines, possibly simplifying the text and referring to international rather than national security. The ethical dimensions might also be treated separately from security, as it was in the Geneva Plan of Action. Delegations expressed support for UNESCO activities on the ethical dimension and commented that a consensus on principles of an ethical cyberspace may be helpful.

### **Follow-up and review**

A number of delegations underscored the important role of international organizations in the follow-up to WSIS and, including ITU, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNDP, UNDESA, IFIs, WIPO and others, and called for their continued engagement. The United Nations Group on the Information Society could continue to coordinate the work of United Nations system on further WSIS implementation. Some delegations noted that the means of implementation of the WSIS outcomes comprised both financial and non-financial aspects and reiterated the importance of capacity-building. Additional work on specific WSIS indicators should be considered.

Some delegations expressed continued support for an annual reporting cycle on WSIS follow-up while also acknowledging a need for linkages with follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The annual WSIS Forum, IGF and a number of other ongoing mechanisms dealing with a range of ICT issues should be taken into account in the review process. One delegation proposed that the annual report of CSTD could feed into an annual HLPF review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Another suggested that national presentations could serve to share experiences on how WSIS-related efforts have supported SDG implementation and expanded ICT access.

Some delegations called for a commitment by the General Assembly to undertake overall reviews every five or ten years, for example in the form of a high-level summit given the rapid pace of technological evolution and social change. While others were open to holding a future high-level meeting, they were not convinced of the need for a summit given the extensive reviews that have taken place and that are likely to continue to take place. A number of delegations were opposed to

any renegotiation of WSIS outcomes. Delegations concurred that a review of WSIS in 2030 should include an assessment of the WSIS contribution to achievement of the SDGs.

Further discussion may be needed on rationalization of review processes in connection with a Secretary-General report currently being prepared. Some delegations suggested that all future WSIS reviews should continue to be fully multi-stakeholder.

#### **Next steps**

Delegations were encouraged to submit written comments by 30 October. The zero draft would then be revised by the Co-Facilitators and circulated by 4 November. There will be an opportunity for consultation with stakeholders at the IGF meeting in Brazil. The Co-Facilitators will subsequently convene informal consultations to discuss the text with a view to arriving at a consensus-based outcome shortly before the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 15 and 16 December.

*The full webcast of the meeting is available online at <http://unpan3.un.org/wsis10/Events/2nd-Preparatory-Meeting> along with statements by delegations and detailed written comments on the zero draft of the outcome document.*