



## Overall Review of the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes by the United Nations General Assembly

2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Meeting, 20-22 OCT

### Statement by the European Union and its Member States

Co-Facilitators,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\* and Serbia\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

First, we would like to thank you for your hard work preparing the zero draft of the WSIS+10 High Level Review Meeting outcome document, and for giving us the opportunity to provide our views on the text. We will be submitting more detailed written comments separately.

Yesterday's interactive dialogue provided an important opportunity to hear the views of the multi-stakeholder community on the zero draft and we look forward to their continued active and meaningful engagement in this process and the High Level Meeting itself. In this regard, we regret recent changes to this week's programme, which for us represent a step backwards from UN General Assembly best practice regarding inclusivity and stakeholder participation as demonstrated most recently by the post-2015 inter-governmental negotiation process. The EU and its Member States would like to emphasise that we will be approaching all sessions in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, and urge all Member States to do the same.

Co-Facilitators,

The EU and its Member States welcome the zero draft, which we see as a solid basis for our discussions going forward. The implementation of WSIS outcomes is - and should remain - a development focused process. We welcome the reaffirmation in the zero draft of the vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, which should guide the entire outcome document.

---

\* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

We support the efforts in the zero draft to better align the WSIS agenda with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the references to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We believe that the text could be further strengthened by highlighting the importance of consistency between WSIS implementation and the 2030 Agenda, in particular the ICT for development related target 9.c and the ongoing work on indicators for the 2030 Agenda.

We welcome the inclusion of a separate section on human rights in the zero draft and see further opportunities for mainstreaming of human rights throughout the text. However, we do not believe that this section should be subsumed under an Internet Governance heading. We welcome the reaffirmation that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online in accordance with GA resolution 69/166, but believe that the outcome document should include an explicit call for a safe and enabling environment for journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders. It should also recognise the threats created by online censorship, restrictions in social media, website blocking, and that these activities are undermining full realisation of the WSIS vision. We do not believe that the outcome document should include a specific reference to the right to development, and should avoid any suggestion that this constitutes a "fundamental freedom".

Furthermore, we welcome the expanded references to the gender digital divide in the zero draft and efforts to prioritise and mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment across all areas of WSIS implementation. This remains a priority for the EU.

We continue to call for the WSIS review to address the full breadth of the WSIS agenda in a balanced way. Here, we welcome the references in the zero draft to the importance of an enabling environment for ICT and development, but believe that the text could be strengthened further by addressing cultural diversity and by recognising the role of ICTs in enabling multilingualism, cultural practice and the preservation of cultural heritage.

We welcome the references in the zero draft to the environmental dimensions of ICTs. We believe that the development of ICTs has a decisive role to play in tackling global warming and environmental change, and that it is both a tool and a goal to do so. ICTs can be a driver for a more optimised usage of natural resources, especially in urban areas where populations are increasingly concentrated.

Promoting open and inclusive decision-making, involving all stakeholders, is a key priority for the EU. All stakeholders have roles to play in building the Information Society. The multi-stakeholder model of internet governance remains at the heart of WSIS and applies to all elements of the Agenda, including the implementation of enhanced cooperation where the zero draft could be clearer that all stakeholders play a role. Transparency and access to information are crucial elements to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, freedom of expression, access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions as agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe the outcome document could be further strengthened in this regard.

We welcome the call in the zero draft for an extension of the existing mandate of the IGF, maintaining its essential character as an open and accessible forum in accordance with the mandate as set out in the Tunis Agenda. However, we believe a ten year mandate is

appropriate in line with the June Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which comprises 47 Member States.

We also call for the outcome document to include a reference to the Netmundial Declaration and its outcomes, as well as to the internet universality concept elaborated in UNESCO's work, which reaffirms that the Internet is human rights-based, open, accessible to all, and nurtured by multi-stakeholder participation.

Co-Facilitators,

The mandate for this WSIS+10 General Assembly Review is set out in GA resolution 68/302, which decided that the review will be "undertaken on the basis of and with full respect for the Tunis Agenda". The EU and its Member States are therefore not able to support proposals that stray beyond this mandate, in particular the reference in the zero draft to calls for an international legal framework for internet governance. We also believe that elements in the zero draft relating to cyber security, cybercrime and cyber terrorism go beyond the mandate for this Review or duplicate ongoing discussions and processes in other fora, for example the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, and should therefore be avoided. Treatment of these issues should be consistent with the appropriate WSIS Action Line on "building confidence and security in the use of ICTs" and be included in the ICT for development section of the outcome document.

The EU and its Member States believe that follow-up and review of WSIS implementation is important. This should be aligned to the follow-up and review process agreed for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. We believe that CSTD's continued role in reviewing implementation of WSIS outcomes could usefully feed into the 2030 Agenda reviews through the HLPF. However, we are not able to support calls in the zero draft for a Summit or High Level Review Meeting that would assess or reconsider new legal instruments or open up the Tunis Agenda, and any future high level review meeting would have to be on the basis of multi-stakeholder modalities and ensure the full participation of the WSIS stakeholder community.

Co-Facilitators,

Let me close by thanking both of you again for your tireless efforts. We have full confidence in you continuing to hold the pen on the outcome document going forward, and you can be assured of the EU and its Member States' continued active and constructive engagement.

Thank you.