

UK - ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union. We would like to thank the co-facilitators for all of the work they have done during this process, the stakeholders who responded to the non-paper and those that took part in the discussion on Monday. The discussion was valuable and fruitful and we look forward to further opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute to the review.

The UK believes that the World Summit on the Information Society should be focused on sustainable development and there is much in this section of the zero draft documents that we welcome. There is a lot of common ground here. However, we must ensure that the zero-draft is balanced and that it sets out our task, to conduct a review of WSIS outcomes, to look at potential gaps, achievements and challenges.

The document rightly recognises the achievements of the last ten years, drawing on evidence from the CSTD Review and the increasing importance of the digital economy to the global economy. These achievements have been made largely thanks to private sector investment and thanks to governments who have created an enabling environment for that investment; we welcome recognition of this in the outcome document.

We would like to see recognition that it is the multi-stakeholder character of WSIS which has enabled these achievements, with stakeholders working in collaboration with one another.

We agree that the spread of innovative technologies should be a core focus of the WSIS process. But this should not be technology for its own sake. Our mandate is not just ICT infrastructure. Our mandate is the Information Society. That means that we also need to consider how technology is used and applied and how people in all parts of the world can benefit from it.

We welcome the emphasis in on the social benefits of the Information Society. We would like to see more emphasis, however, on the challenges that remain in Action Line C7.

It is true that we have seen breakthroughs in terms of e-government, e-health, e-agriculture and so forth. But there are still many parts of the world that have not experienced these breakthroughs and there are many challenges still to be overcome.

We think overall that the document needs to bring out much more clearly the relationships between the WSIS Action Lines – including Action Line C7 - and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Many countries have said that the review of WSIS is a key opportunity to align the WSIS agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals, and we believe that if our review is going to provide practical and workable solutions for developing countries then in fact most of the outcome document should focus on these issues.

We are concerned about discussions around opening the Digital Solidarity Fund, because we believe we should look forward, we now have the Addis Ababa agenda recently endorsed by the UN GA. This is an historic international agreement which recognises the essential role of the private sector in mobilising resources to fund sustainable development, especially in sectors such as infrastructure. The outcome document should ensure that the potential for ICTs is fully integrated in this agenda.

We welcome the statement that Internet Governance should be open and transparent and the emphasis should be on greater participation of all stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries. We do not support calls for an international legal framework. This would undermine the multi-stakeholder model that was defined in the Tunis agenda and put at risk the dynamism, which across the world has brought so many social and economic benefits. We are also disappointed at the suggestion of a 5-year extension.

We welcome paragraph 18, which covers local content and services and on people's skills in making use of ICT. But this needs more than one sentence – it is a critical element in building the Information Society.

The draft document neglects many of the issues for which UNESCO is the facilitator. We need fully to address issues around literacy, the development of relevant local content and applications, the preservation of cultural content, and the ability of people to create, share and access information and knowledge. These are essential to driving sustainable development just as much as ICT infrastructure.

In response to questions on financing mechanisms, we welcome the emphasis in paragraph 31 on the importance of private sector investment, and believe that this should come further up in the text. The private sector is currently investing hundreds of billions and if we want to deliver financial investment then we must work in partnership with the private sector.

We welcome the sub-section on an enabling environment, experience over the last ten years has demonstrated what works and note that the elements in paragraph 22 are critically important to tackling the digital divide and it is essential that they are retained. We would like to add to them: the efficient allocation of spectrum, infrastructure sharing models and proportionate taxation and licensing fees. These are essential enablers to investment and to

tackling the digital divide. Many countries have found that lowering taxation in the short term leads to an increase in tax revenues in the longer term. Many countries are lowering import taxes in order to make devices more affordable because they know that making connectivity more affordable will drive the economic growth in the long term. We also welcome the emphasis in paragraphs 20 and 21 on gender equality and the empowerment of women. We heard yesterday that this is clearly a priority for many countries. We will not build the Information Society while there remains such a gender divide and we need concrete measures to address this too. We need to understand the causes of this divide. We would like these paragraphs to make stronger reference to the social, educational and economic reasons behind the gender digital divide and call on stakeholders to work urgently to overcome them.

Financing issues are vitally important. We are concerned, however, about the suggestion to review options for the Digital Solidarity Fund and would like to hear more about what kind of review. What proposals would be considered? We should be clear that the Digital Solidarity Fund was not a commitment under Tunis. Paragraph 28 of the Tunis Agenda welcomes this fund, but it was not a commitment.

The Fund had good intentions. It is widely recognised, however, that this fund did not achieve what was hoped for it. In fact, as the distinguished delegate from Latvia has reminded us, there was a very broad discussion at Tunis about financing mechanisms and the Tunis Agenda has 26 paragraphs of text on this subject setting out the broader picture of the financing priorities in 2005.

We now have the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, recently endorsed by the UN General Assembly, which sets out a new framework on financing for development. Rather than look at old models, the WSIS review outcome document should aim to ensure that the potential of ICTs for development should be configured in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also called for a Technology Transfer Mechanism to support the Sustainable Development Goals. These are the kinds of detailed links that the outcome document should elaborate in order to align WSIS with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

We believe that it is only by elaborating the links between the WSIS Action Lines and the Sustainable Development Agenda that we will be able to construct a more integrated approach to development: making sure that mainstream development programmes fully exploit the potential of the Information Society and also ensuring that the ICT sector is able to benefit from mainstream development programmes.

This should be the focus of our efforts and it should be the main emphasis of the outcome document. The EU has mentioned the work presented at the WSIS Forum – this could be a good basis.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The United Kingdom would like to align itself with the statement made by the EU.

The UK welcomes the statement in paragraph 32 that Internet governance should be open, inclusive and transparent and we welcome the emphasis in paragraph 34 on promoting greater participation of all stakeholders, particularly from developing countries. In our view, all stakeholders have roles to play in building the Information Society. No stakeholder acting in isolation – government, private sector, civil society or technical – can effectively achieve its aims in isolation.

The last ten years have shown us that open and inclusive decision-making, involving all stakeholders, delivers better and more sustainable outcomes.

Legal framework

For this reason, we do not support calls for an international legal framework for Internet governance referred to in paragraph 36.

Of course, this does not mean that Internet is some kind of “wild west” where the law does not apply. The law applies online as it does offline.

But imposing inter-governmental treaties on the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance would undermine the kinds of innovation and investment that we have seen over the last ten years, holding back the expansion of the Internet in developing countries and hindering technological innovation.

The successful development of the Internet, has depended on open and collaborative approaches, involving all stakeholders. We believe that should continue.

We were also surprised to see paragraph 36 in the draft document because it appears to step outside of our mandate. New international laws on Internet governance would break apart the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance that was agreed at Tunis ten years ago.

IGF

As we said in our statement yesterday, we are very disappointed by the suggestion of a 5-year extension to the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum. Disappointed and surprised, as we have heard so many expressions of support for the IGF.

The 47 Member States of the Council of Europe have called for a 10-year extension. Many other countries and stakeholders have also called for a 10-year mandate. We believe this makes sense. It would allow the IGF – and potential hosts of the IGF in the future – enough certainty and stability to plan and develop. And it would give certainty to donors and to participants.

The IGF has a broad mandate set out in the Tunis Agenda. It has established itself as an essential forum for international and regional cooperation in the area of Internet governance, bringing stakeholders together to share best practice and shape policy debate. We believe it is essential that the IGF should retain its unique character as an open and accessible forum.

We fully support the outcome of the CSTD Working Group on IGF improvements. These improvements include improving the participation of governments and the visibility of its outcomes. They were discussed carefully, following multi-stakeholder consultation, and agreed in CSTD.

We know that work is already well underway already to make these improvements and we thank Brazil for the contribution that they are making as hosts of the next IGF in a few weeks time. There is no need to weaken the IGF by making its mandate dependent on these changes, which are already happening.

Ask g77 for clarification about what aspects of the composition they would like to be reviewed.

There is more to do to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly from developing countries, are able to participate.

Enhanced cooperation

We welcome the recognition in paragraph 38 that progress has been made in enhanced cooperation and that Internet governance processes have evolved in response to changes in technology and demands from stakeholders.

We do not believe that this should be a separate section in the document – it is part of the Internet governance section. Since the WSIS in 2005, we have seen the development of many different kinds of enhanced cooperation and partnership to address different challenges.

The CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation identified many new examples that have emerged, including governments and other stakeholders. Its report noted that the list of mechanisms for cooperation which it identified is not exhaustive: old mechanisms will cease to exist as new mechanisms appear.

We note that some delegations have called for some kind of inter-governmental process in this area, excluding other stakeholders. Imposing a new, "one-size-fits-all" inter-governmental process would slow the pace of development; reduce the economic and social benefits we have seen. It could not respond quickly and effectively to new innovation and there is a danger that it would duplicate work taking place elsewhere and become expensive and irrelevant.

We note the G77 written contribution says that they will submit detailed modalities for an inter-governmental forum. We would like to seek clarification on when this will be available, if there is more we can say about it now or whether we should wait for a future occasion when we can discuss it.

It would be helpful to have a better understanding of the real practical issues that need to be addressed and whether setting up another intergovernmental body is really the best way to address them.

In our view we need to ensure that processes for cooperation are able to respond effectively to the pace of innovation and change and that they are inclusive and accessible, particularly for developing countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the comments made by the European Union.

We welcome text on human rights in the zero draft, but we believe much more needs to be said on the challenges that human rights abuses currently pose to building the Information Society. We also believe that human rights apply to the whole of the WSIS agenda and agree with those member states who have stated that this section of the document should not simply be a sub-section under Internet governance.

It is important, of course that we strongly reaffirm universally accepted human rights. But we believe that we need to go further than reaffirming human rights, we believe that there is a range of people-centred issues running throughout the WSIS Action Lines, many of them linked to human rights, which need to be properly reviewed.

For example, Action Lines C3 on access to information, C7 on ICT applications, C8 on cultural diversity, C9 on media and C10 on ethical dimensions all cover areas which are linked to the broader human rights agenda and which need to consider the achievements, challenges and gaps in implementing these action lines.

Many of these issues have been addressed at previous WSIS review events, both in the CSTD review, the ITU hosted high level event and in the UNESCO reviews.

The ITU-hosted High Level Event outcome document addressed many of these issues at length last year.

The High Level Event last year was a multi-stakeholder event. After almost one year of thorough preparation, consultation, in-depth discussion and detailed work the High Level Event was able to reach consensus between all the governments and all other stakeholders. It was a really significant achievement. We pay tribute to the chair of the preparatory process for that event, Professor Minkin of the Russian Federation. Please to see him here. He had a very challenging task and we are grateful to him for his guidance during the process.

We would suggest looking back at the UNESCO final review document, which was adopted at the 37th session of UNESCO's general council. Both the UNESCO review and the High level document were significant steps forward. My delegation has found them to be very valuable and we would encourage other distinguished delegations to look again at these documents. We would encourage the co-facilitators - as you consider the development of the text - to look at the language again in these documents, for example, around issues of people centred development. There is a lot of wisdom and experience in these outcome documents and we should draw on that.

We welcome paragraph 40 of the draft document and its affirmation of freedom of expression and the independence of the press. We would like to add a reference to the protection of journalists. The outcome document of the High Level Event hosted last year by the ITU called for "a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers". The final statement of the UNESCO review, includes a reference to "promote and ensure the safety for online journalists, bloggers and human rights activists. We believe these points should be reflected in the outcome documents.

We welcome paragraph 42 and the recognition that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. We would like to add that this is "applicable to media on all platforms", as stated in the High Level Event outcome document.

Our mandate in this review is to look at challenges and gaps and we believe that the draft document must recognise the human rights challenges that we face.

There are serious threats to freedom of expression and plurality of information in many parts of the world. Online censorship, restrictions in social media, website blocking and other measures are undermining fundamental human rights. Many journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders suffer from fear of attack, intimidation, politically-motivated prosecution and arbitrary libel suits. Our outcome document must recognise these challenges and call on states to address them urgently.

The ability of people to create, share and access information and knowledge and to exercise their fundamental freedoms online is closely linked to sustainable development. There is an important link to be made with Goal 16.10 of the Sustainable Development Agenda, on ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms.

In our view, societies, economies and communities and individuals thrive and develop when there is openness, transparency and access to information.

This is in our view linked to Action Line C3, which discusses public access to information, improving local governance and Action Line C7 discusses promoting transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

The High Level Event text on Action Line C8 talks about promoting diversity of cultural expression, a topic which is clearly linked to freedom of expression and the final statement of the UNESCO view says that everyone has the right to express themselves, to create and disseminate their work, in the language of their choice.

Action Line C10 talks about promoting fundamental values such as freedom and equality. Our vision, is that the WSIS vision, is of a people centred inclusive and development oriented Information Society, and this broad set of human rights issues, which run throughout the WSIS Action Lines need to be fully addressed in our review.

We recall one of the stakeholders that we need to bring people back in to WSIS and we need to bring them back into the centre, and we need to make people centred development the focus of our agenda. This is why we need to see strong and clear language on these issues in the zero-draft document.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY

The UK aligns its position with the European Union. The EU and its Member States believe that the outcome document should concentrate on the development issues involved in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs. We agree that this subject should sit in the section on ICT for development.

We welcome the acknowledgment in paragraph 46 that many stakeholders are already working through a wide range of initiatives in this area. A lot of progress has been made by stakeholders over the last ten years to build confidence and security.

We do not support the proposal that governments' role should be enhanced. To respond to the point made by China about the role of governments in building confidence and security, yes, of course, Governments have a vitally important role to play here – that is absolutely clear. However, we will only build confidence and security by working with all stakeholders. Governments cannot build confidence and security on their own.

For example:

- The private sector owns and operates ICT infrastructure and provides services.
- Civil society and users of ICTs need to be represented and need to be able to understand the risks and issues involved.
- The technical community has a fundamental role to play in helping to prevent and detect cybercrime, for example, or making technical improvements to security.

We cannot build confidence or security by down-grading the roles of these stakeholders. We need to harness the efforts of all stakeholders.

As the EU said, the current text gives the impression that governments' only role is in relation to national security. In our view, governments have a much broader set of roles in terms of working with stakeholders and promoting support for capacity building and development and these should be fully reflected in our text.

Therefore, We would like to remove the text in paragraphs 46, 48 and 49 on national security, cyber terrorism, threats and crime. Yes, of course, we are all committed to tackling terrorism and terrorist use of ICTs, however, this is quite out of place in a review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes. These issues are being addressed in other parts of the United Nations. There is a risk we will cause duplication or will we cause confusion while failing to deliver on our own mandate.

We propose instead that the outcome document should recognise and support the work undertaken by the UNGGE on norms and behaviours in cyber space.

We welcome the text in paragraph 50 on increased global efforts and cooperation, but as Colombia, Switzerland and the EU and others have noted - there is already an International Convention on Cybercrime – the Budapest Convention – and perhaps we need to take that into account.

The outcome document of the WSIS review should concentrate on the development issues involved in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, with a particular focus on the needs of developing countries. That means looking at issues such as the development of Computer Security Incident Response Teams, national cyber security strategies, collaboration with stakeholders and raising public awareness.

We need a holistic approach to building confidence and security, which includes issues as such, education, capacity building, skills, regulatory best practice and multi-stakeholder cooperation. These important areas are currently neglected in the text but if we are serious about taking practical steps to build confidence security, then these are the critical issues that our review should focus on.

Finally, we welcome the text in paragraph 50 on increased global efforts and cooperation, but we note also that there is already an International Convention on Cybercrime – The Budapest Convention – and we do not believe there is a need for another one.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW UP

The UK aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

This is an important topic and we agree with India, that how WSIS moves forward, questions of follow up and how we manage future review of WSIS is one of the key questions that we need to consider as part of the review itself.

However, we need to consider the question of review holistically alongside the other issues. We believe it makes sense to have future review of the WSIS agenda just before the review of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. This time round the timing has of the WSIS review alongside the Sustainable Development Agenda has not been ideal. The Sustainable Development Agenda was discussed and agreed before the WSIS review. This meant that we were at something of a disadvantage in arguing the case for the potential of ICTs in sustainable development. We believe the next review of WSIS should be timed for 2025 so that it can feed in to the review of the Sustainable Development Agenda in 2030 and help ensure that the Information Society is well placed both to contribute to that review and benefit from it.

We have not heard arguments to justify a summit or purely inter-government meeting.

We will need a review mechanism in the future which is focused not on - solving and practical solutions to emerging challenges, particularly for developing countries. A review which can respond to the challenges of the next ten years. That review should be fully multi-stakeholder if we are to continue to harness the efforts of all stakeholders and build the Information Society for the benefit of all.

We have seen the benefits of multi-stakeholder discussions. The UNESCO review and the ITU High Level Event demonstrated how reaching out to stakeholders and inviting them to contribute can enrich our understanding, promote greater cooperation and improve delivery of the outcomes that we aim to achieve.

The multi-stakeholder discussion here on Monday was a valuable and fruitful conversation. Stakeholders have demonstrated again and again that they bring real value to the table, and the next review should not exclude them.