

Statement by the United States of America

Second Preparatory Meeting for the Overall Review of the Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

October 20, 2015

As delivered by

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The Government of the United States of America is pleased to submit feedback and recommendations on the “zero draft” outcome document for the UN General Assembly ten-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10). We appreciate the hard work and dedication of the co-facilitators from Latvia and the United Arab Emirates to accept feedback from all stakeholders on the non-paper and engage in a dialogue to find common ground and shared interests for reflection in the final outcome document.

We welcome the opportunity afforded by this ten-year review to reaffirm the WSIS principles and vision established a decade ago and to recommit ourselves to creating the global Information Society that we all want. We see value in looking at the evidence of the last ten years and celebrating and recognizing the multistakeholder efforts that have led to the development of the Information Society we have seen to date. We have also heard, respect, and acknowledge that continued efforts by all stakeholders within the existing framework must aim to make the Information Society more accessible and tangible for all people, including the billions of people who still lack access to ICTs.

We appreciate and acknowledge that this community has held true to its commitment to an open dialogue and a reaffirmation and review of the WSIS. We respect the facilitators’ effort to distill the written and verbal contributions from a range of stakeholders and input documents, and we are prepared to engage in constructive dialogue on the issues contained in the zero draft.

At the same time, we believe the outcome document could better reflect existing agreements, ensure that data and evidence are presented more accurately, and eliminate some unsubstantiated assumptions. In short, the final document should focus on the many values and goals that strongly unite us rather than exacerbate the few areas of disagreement that divide us.

Taking a step back, we ask our colleagues to recall the three objectives that we've been asked to accomplish by the time we gather at the High Level Meeting in December. We need to reach consensus on an outcome document that does three things:

- (1) Takes stock of the progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes;
- (2) Addresses potential ICT gaps and areas for continued focus; and
- (3) Addresses challenges, including bridging the digital divide, and harnessing ICTs for development.

The United States believes that all three of these objectives can be achieved under the existing frameworks we collectively established a decade ago. We are open to collaboration, cooperation, and creative win-win strategies and ideas based on evidence of what has served us well thus far. The United States welcomes continued efforts to connect everyone everywhere to ICTs and the Internet and to ensure that they have the skills and freedom to use that connectivity safely and productively. We also welcome the effort to reinforce and strengthen the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, including the effort to make more meaningful the participation of all stakeholders from every nation of the world in existing multistakeholder institutions.

In order to assist those efforts and ensure that this gathering and the outcome document we construct creates value for the people we all collectively serve, we believe that the final outcome document needs to modify and build upon the zero draft. We feel that adopting some parts of the zero draft would lead to unintended consequences that would harm our joint efforts at fulfilling the WSIS mission and vision. Therefore, we make the following suggestions:

First, we appreciate the inclusion of information and statistics on the progress made over the past decade in building the Information Society. However, we believe the outcome document could be more useful by illuminating the different experiences and outcomes that people have in different countries facing similar circumstances. The experiences of developing nations and even those of advanced economies are not monolithic. We should consider highlighting what has worked

in national or local circumstances. We should not present data that would lead people to believe that geography determines their digital destiny. It does not.

Second, the outcome document should also more strongly support the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance and more accurately reflect the role of non-governmental stakeholders towards achieving the Information Society. Some of the language in the zero draft seems to question their significance. While recognizing that governments can help create enabling environments, the foundation of the Information Society has been innovation and investment by non-government stakeholders, bolstered by programming and assistance to help with reach, content, and diversity. We should clearly acknowledge the utility of this multistakeholder approach and recommit ourselves to this model for continued ICT growth and improvement. In addition, we should make a much stronger commitment to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The IGF remains the best place and mechanism for gathering all stakeholders to analyze, deliberate, and share ideas on Internet governance issues and challenges.

Third, the zero draft should be restructured to be more in-line with the WSIS outcome documents because those documents reflect the consensus will of this body. Security and human rights issues in WSIS are not containable within the concept of “Internet governance,” so they should not be addressed as such in the outcome document. ICT and the Internet are used both to increase and threaten our security as well as to further and diminish the exercise of human rights, but ICTs are not the cause of security threats or human rights violations. Those causes are being dealt with in much more expert forums than this one. Within WSIS, these issues are addressed for all ICTs through the Action Lines, so they should be discussed under “ICT for development.” When discussing cybersecurity and Internet freedom issues specifically, the outcome document should clearly identify the relevant UN venues that are addressing these issues, including the UN GGE, UNODC, HRC, and the Action Line facilitators, as well as efforts outside the UN system.

Fourth, the final outcome document should be careful to correctly reference previously agreed language from other texts, including the World Summit. Many outcome documents are the product of long negotiations that constitute compromises and concessions from all sides and are carefully balanced from beginning to end to achieve consensus. These outcomes should be viewed holistically, and we should refrain from picking and choosing individual paragraphs. This should be reflected in references to the WSIS outcome documents, various UN resolutions and reports, and international law.

Lastly, as to a plan for the future, the outcome document should outline a process for continued WSIS implementation that is focused on continued execution on the WSIS principles and Action Lines and utilizes a review process that is evidence-based, useful, efficient, and lean. We believe the annual reviews by CSTD, through ECOSOC, are sufficient to this end. For that reason, we do not support another Summit or High Level Meeting to revisit or renegotiate the WSIS outcomes because we do not believe that is the best use of our resources and time. Ten years after the original WSIS meeting, we are now reaffirming that our predecessors created the right foundation for work. We may not have been sure about that back then. We are now.

Let us unite around those things we agree on, set aside those issues that divide us, and focus on the people we are here to serve.

We look forward to a continued productive dialogue and to providing more specific feedback during the different interactive sessions.

Thank you.