

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS
outcomes**

Submitted by

ACCESS

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Questionnaire for the CSTD's ten year review of WSIS implementation

This questionnaire is open to all stakeholders.

Please share your experience, views and priorities in response to the following questions, addressing the issues that you consider most important for the CSTD' s ten-year WSIS review. Issues that you might consider could include any or more of the following, but need not be confined to these:

- **infrastructure, access and inclusiveness;**
- **content, applications and capacity-building;**
- **technical, financial and related issues;**
- **governance and wider public policy aspects of the Information Society;**
- **social, economic and other development activities and impacts;**
- **the implications of new trends in technology and services;**
- **measurement and monitoring of the Information Society; and**
- **the relationship between the Information Society, sustainable development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.**

Information about the respondent

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6. **Which stakeholder category do you belong to?**

Civil society

Other (please specify)

Access (AccessNow.org) is an international organization that defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining innovative policy, user engagement, and direct technical support, we fight for open and secure communications for all.

We have been accredited to participate in WSIS and ITU meetings, specifically the WSIS+10 meeting in Paris, WSIS Forum 2014, and the World Telecommunication Policy Forum, but do not fit into any of the categories above. Access has applied for ECOSOC accreditation. Our application should be considered in 2014.

7. To what extent, in your experience, has the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?

Access notes that the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principle has gradually taken effect with notable events such as the ITU facilitated a Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform (MPP)¹ and NetMundial² which have further opened and democratised our Internet governance processes within the internet governance ecosystem. While the MPP suffered an eleventh hour breakdown in multistakeholderism, as parts of the final statements were briefly negotiated behind closed doors, the HLE and the larger MPP process, this initiative is still historic in that it marks the first embrace of multistakeholderism by the notoriously closed ITU.

Access also notes that the 2013 WSIS Forum identified the importance of “promot[ing] the multistakeholder approach to measuring ICT4D and WSIS targets to get maximum information” as an emerging trend. The Emerging Trends report also notes that “good public governance can leverage ICTs in ... ways to increase efficiency and accountability...”. Multistakeholder approaches affirm the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principle; in creation of a “people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society” and thus ensure that policy decisions are informed from a wide range of opinions from experts and from those who are affected by the policies.

8. How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?

C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

Public governance authorities, as well as all stakeholders including civil society and the private sector, have important roles to play in the promotion of ICTs for development. While the Tunis Agenda has been instrumental in institutionalizing the multistakeholder model, the roles and responsibility framework outlined in para. 35 of the Tunis Agenda is unnecessarily limiting. Shifting away from the roles and

¹ <http://www.itu.int/wsisis/review/mpp/>

² <http://netmundial.br/>

responsibilities framework would allow all stakeholders to contribute more freely for the promotion of ICTs for development.

However, Access notes that there have been various positive efforts at attaining this goal led by the various stakeholders among the following; ECLAC (a multi-stakeholder platform for high-level dialogue and regional cooperation on ICT policies) and the Africa ICT Alliance, (a private sector-led cooperation among African ICT organizations)³

C2. Information and communication infrastructure

The main achievement in this Action Line area is the spread of broadband infrastructure. We however note that this is uneven and is currently widening the Global Digital divide among developed and emerging markets and the Global South.

Access also takes note of an important focus of connectivity initiatives focused on schools, under the framework of 'Connect a School, Connect a Community programme.'⁴ The initiative is laudable as it serves to reaffirm the vital role of youth and youth organizations as recognized in paragraph 11 in the WSIS Declaration of Principles, stating that "youth should be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and wellbeing".

C3. Access to information and knowledge

Access notes efforts by various stakeholders at achieving this action line, for example; UNESCO and the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs developed the global report Opening New Avenues for Empowerment, which offers a model policy for accessible ICTs, in support of implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵

C4. Capacity building

³ Report of the Secretary General. Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/a69d65_en.pdf

⁴ http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/connect/flagship_initiatives/connecting_children/index.html.

⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/unesco-global-report-opening-new-avenues-for-empowerment-icts-to-access-information-and-knowledge-for-persons-with-disabilities/>.

Access notes of initiatives by various stakeholders such as; UNESCO and its Information for All Program (IFAP) efforts at establishing criteria for assessing ways of enhancing discussion, building capacity for decision-making at national and regional levels, and conducting research to measuring developments in the field of information ethics.

C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

At Access we are concerned of the use of invasive and disproportionate policy responses (on Cyber Security) that can imperil human rights and economic development. In this context we fully support the need for education and awareness building to ensure that the various existing fora that work to build confidence and security in ICTs are supported by all stakeholders.

C6. Enabling environment

A significant number of governments have re-entered infrastructure markets by establishing government-financed or government-owned broadband networks. While this has been beneficial in extending network provision, care must be taken to ensure that it does not reinstate government-controlled monopolies over critical infrastructure which could jeopardise both future network deployment and freedom of expression. Care also needs to be taken to avoid negative outcomes for future infrastructure deployment and for consumer prices arising from consolidation of network operators and service providers in national markets.

C9. Media

As the WSIS Forum 2012 & 2013 Booklet on Identifying Emerging Trends and a Vision Beyond 2015 notes, there are increasing challenges in addressing freedom of expression and privacy protection on the internet. The liability of intermediaries and governmental surveillance are also negatively impacting to freedom of expression on internet and the right to privacy. Moreover, we have documented cyberattacks on journalists and bloggers, who are targeted specifically for the opinions they hold and express online.

C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Access notes that there are emerging areas of ethical inquiry which include: examining the interface between information technologies, social transformation and governance are the relation between human rights and ethical principles for the information society; the challenges of culture and traditions in information ethics; the possible tensions between issues of privacy and security; issues of free access to public and governmental information; and the fundamental question of personal and collective identities in a digital world.

C11. International and regional cooperation

International and regional cooperation among all stakeholders is vital in the advancement of the Information Society for supporting sustainable development beyond 2015 and it will be most effective through the proven inclusive and open multi stakeholder model.

Access considers that there is a need for further development of international ICT indicators with agreed standards and facilitate data collection, respectful of the right to privacy; promote open data initiatives by paying particular attention to transparency and proactive disclosure of data

9. How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?

We note that ICTs have been increasingly adopted by citizens in achieving their personal goals, and by governments, development actors and civil society organisations in delivering improvements in social and economic outcomes. Though there is effort to ensure that similar benefits are experienced in a wide scale manner in the global south. We however note a few challenges below.

10. What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?

Various challenges remain for all stakeholders to fully participate in their respective roles in the implementation of WSIS outcomes and as a member of civil society, we will limit our response to the particular barriers that we face. These include:

- a) Exclusion from participating in global internet governance debates, or from participating as independent actors: While we welcome governments forming multistakeholder delegations to global internet governance fora, being part of a national delegation does not substitute for independent civil society participation.
- b) Barriers to full participation, on equal footing with other stakeholder groups: Without addressing the issue of decision-making, civil society is often limited in our ability to participate fully in meetings. For example,
- c) We often do not enjoy speaking rights or the ability to contribute documents;
- d) We are sometimes not permitted to view the all relevant documents, which limits our ability to make informed contributions;
- e) Modalities of participation are often unclear so it is difficult to participate fully, or make the decision to participate at all;

f) Limited resources: Civil society has limited resources, both financial and human, to fully participate in internet governance at the global level. To compound this problem, lack of information about or notice of meetings can make it difficult to make an informed decision about which meetings to attend.

g) Linguistic barriers often prevent a diverse representation of civil society from participating internet governance at the global level.

11. How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?

Access notes various attempts at addressing the above challenges and reaffirms that those who are most marginalised in the global information society are those who are not yet online. So the most urgent action in this respect is to spread affordable access to the majority of the world's population who is not yet enjoying the benefits of new technology. Further actions that can promote effective participation of all people include:

a) Outline clear modalities, with the default being that civil society can attend and participate on equal footing with other stakeholders.

b) Provide advance notice for all meetings

c) Make available travel fellowships

d) Schedule meetings far in advance and in places that are not exorbitantly expensive

e) Publish all relevant material, with no password requirements

f) Use multilingual content and translation/interpretation whenever possible

g) Remote participation

12. What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?

a) There have been reduced cost of the hardware devices needed to use the internet and to set up networking, including lower cost computers, mobile phones, routers, wifi devices and wifi enabled computers and phones

b) There has been increased network access through various initiatives such as efforts by government or institutions, operators and other businesses and locally run wifi networks and hotspots, V-Sat installations and mesh networks and efforts at reduction in cost of internet access.

We note that ICTs have been increasingly adopted by citizens in achieving their personal goals, and by governments, development actors and civil society organisations in delivering improvements in social and economic outcomes. Though there is effort to ensure that similar benefits are experienced in a wide scale manner in the global south.

13. What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?

a) Protection and reinforcement of human rights, particularly privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association, in a rapidly changing context, ensuring equal respect for and enforcement of human rights online and offline. This is critically important in the light of global concern about government surveillance and commercial exploitation of data and about the growing prevalence of criminal activity, including fraud, online.

17. What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?

Affordable access: While there has been notable growth in internet penetration over the last 10 years, approximately two-thirds of the world still lacks access to the internet, particularly in the developing world. Even where access now exists, it is not affordable for large portions of society. Additionally, one could say we're experiencing a "new" digital divide between those who have low quality access mostly via mobile phones and those with access to cheap, high-speed broadband. Addressing this problem, through the deployment of broadband and internet exchange points (IXPs) for example, should continue to be a priority in the next 10 years.

Human rights: Although the internet is perhaps one of the most important enablers of human rights today, human rights are under increasing threat in the online/digital environment. We view safeguarding and advancing human rights, such as freedom of expression and association, the right to privacy, and access to information as priority challenges to address in the next 10 years. It is critical that institutions and individuals with human rights expertise, such as UNESCO, take the lead in addressing these issues. We therefore strongly support the recommendation from the WSIS+10 Paris meeting that all stakeholders “[r]espect freedom of expression, as defined in the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to education, science and technology and artistic and cultural expressions remain essential for progress towards inclusive knowledge societies, and enhanced cultural diversity” as well as the recommendation to “Promote and ensure the safety of online journalists, bloggers and human right activists.” We also recall Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/20/8, which firmly establishes that the same rights people enjoy offline apply online.



Multistakeholder framework: The multistakeholder framework for internet governance continues to face challenges. We consider the Internet Governance Forum and its regional and national iterations to be valuable institutions for deepening the multistakeholder framework and support their continuation over the next 10 years and beyond. We therefore support the recommendation of the WSIS+10 Paris meeting that all stakeholders "[a]cknowledge the importance of and renew their commitment to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)."

Open architecture and interoperability: We would like to emphasize the importance of maintaining an open Internet based on open standards development processes, as key enablers for an inclusive knowledge and information societies as a priority issue in the next ten years.

18. Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the 10-year CSTD WSIS Review Submission and we support the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as the designated system-wide focal point for follow up to the WSIS outcomes.