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**Progress made in the implementation of and
follow-up to the World Summit on the
Information Society outcomes at the regional and
international levels**

Report of the Secretary-General

Executive summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the United Nations Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), as part of his annual reporting to the commission. It reviews progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS at the international and regional levels, and identifies obstacles and constraints encountered. The report has been prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat based on information provided by entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2008 to implement the outcome of WSIS, with a view to sharing best and effective practices and lessons learned.

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Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to the Economic and Social Council resolutions 2006/46 and 2007/8, which request the United Nations Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), based on inputs from relevant United Nations and other entities as appropriate.

2. In its resolution 2008/3, the council further recommended that in submitting their reports to the CSTD, action line facilitators bring to the attention of the commission obstacles and difficulties encountered by all stakeholders in regard to the commitments and recommendations pertaining to their respective action line at the regional and international levels, and make proposals for possible action to the commission, whenever deemed necessary.

3. The present report incorporates analyses of responses provided by 20 international and regional organizations to a letter from the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, inviting inputs on trends, achievements and obstacles in WSIS outcomes implementation.¹ The report does not claim to provide a comprehensive account of all efforts at WSIS implementation but focuses on major initiatives undertaken since February 2008, as reported by the relevant organizations.²

I. Towards the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society

A. ICT access and use

4. In many respects, the digital divide continued to narrow in 2008. An important milestone in the progress towards a global information society has now been reached: over half the world's population has obtained at least some level of connectivity. In addition, 80–90 per cent of the world's population now lives within range of a cellular network, double the level in 2000. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates that the number of mobile subscriptions had reached 4 billion by the end of 2008, corresponding to a global mobile penetration of more than 60 per cent.³ One of the benefits to emerge from mobile telephony has been the versatility of short message services (SMSs), which are used for increasingly innovative purposes, including financial transactions, market price updates, news transmission, emergency alerts and other important functions.

5. The Internet gap between developed and developing countries is also closing, albeit at a slower pace. At the end of 2008, half of the world's Internet users were in developing countries, especially in Asia. Regionally, Africa and the Middle East are experiencing the fastest mobile and Internet growth.

6. Despite such positive trends, many challenges remain. Large disparities in terms of penetration and affordability still exist, both across and within countries and regions. In developing countries as a whole, only 12 per cent of the population uses the Internet.

¹ COE, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, GAID, IGF, ITC, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNU, UPU, WHO, WIPO and WMO.

² The complete submissions from each organization can be accessed on the CSTD website: <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=2696>.

³ See "Worldwide mobile cellular subscribers to reach 4 billion mark late 2008", 25 September 2008, http://www.itu.int/newsroom/press_releases/2008/29.html.

Moreover, the digital divide debate is increasingly shifting away from measurements of basic connectivity to issues of speed (bandwidth) and user-centric issues such as availability of local content and data privacy. The broadband divide represents a particular challenge, as it continues to widen and as there is a qualitatively very significant difference between those with and those without access to broadband Internet connections. Challenges related to low-cost access to broadband, local content development and data privacy warrant special attention by the CSTD.

B. The broadband divide

7. In spite of the remarkable progress achieved by developing countries in deploying information and communication technology (ICT) and bridging the digital divide, they remain at a disadvantage in terms of broadband coverage, accounting for 35 per cent of the world's broadband subscribers in 2006, with Africa accounting for less than 1 per cent. The "digital divide" is therefore giving way to the "broadband divide". Dial-up Internet is barely powerful enough to handle emails, let alone most local ICT services. Using dial-up can mean waiting several minutes to open an email and even more time to download a PDF file. The slow response discourages or even prevents people from using applications that would improve efficiency and enhance productivity.

8. Affordable broadband access is required to make full use of the opportunities created by the Internet. The United Nations system and other partners – including Governments, civil society and the private sector – are focusing on broadband issues as part of their efforts to assist developing countries achieve WSIS targets and meet the Millennium Development Goals.

9. It is within this context that, at the occasion of the third anniversary of the second phase of WSIS, the Tunisian Government, in collaboration with UNCTAD and ITU, and in partnership with the Global Alliance for ICT and Development and the African Development Bank, organized the third ICT4All Forum – Tunis+3 in Hammamet, Tunisia, in November 2008, under the patronage of the President of Tunisia, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The ICT4All Forum addressed strategies and options to expand access among low-income countries to low-cost fixed or wireless broadband technology. It provided an opportunity to feature some recent broadband initiatives targeting low-income countries as well as to share national experiences relevant to the deployment of broadband. The forum was attended by close to 1,500 participants, representing more than 60 countries.⁴ The ICT4All forum is an important annual event aimed at preserving the momentum of WSIS.

C. Availability of local content

10. From the perspective of making ICT available to all, the lack of local content on the Internet and other forms of ICTs (such as mobile devices) is of growing concern. It is considered a key obstacle to achieving an inclusive information society. Even in developing countries that boast a relatively high level of connectivity, local content – i.e. information provided in local languages, reflecting the values, lifestyles and needs of local communities – is often scarce. Addressing this challenge is essential to release the full potential of the Internet, and to enable knowledge and information to be readily accessed and used by all.⁵

⁴ <http://www.ict4allforum.tn/>.

⁵ In India, for example, more than 18 million people over the age of 15 are Internet users. Nonetheless, most of India's 1 billion people have limited access to the Internet, as they do not speak English. See <http://gigaom.com/2006/08/17/local-content-for-indian-internet-growth/>.

Locally produced content can help empower the poor by e.g. providing them with online learning facilities, creating new business opportunities; improving access to agricultural market information and weather forecasts.

11. Rising Internet penetration alone does not necessarily spur an increase in local content. The production of local content requires that owners or originators have the incentives and resources to create, adapt or exchange such content. Agencies that “push” global (or non-local) content are generally still more powerful and resourceful than those disseminating local content. In many developing countries, individuals and organizations lack the financial and technical resources needed to create content suited to local needs. On the supply side, an attractive business case is required for companies to develop and “push” local content. If the profitability of firms depends on the willingness among the poor segments of society to pay for local content, it is plausible that the private sector alone cannot create the right market conditions to fill this gap. Rather, many content initiatives using ICTs tend to “push” external content towards local communities, helping mainly to facilitate “access” to other people’s knowledge. New technologies and arrangements (such as telecentres) are rarely used to strengthen the “push” of local content from local people. Thus, the balance between “push” and “pull” – or between supply and demand – is heavily weighted towards non-local content.

12. While the importance of local content has been raised in many international meetings and by donors and cooperation agencies, concrete initiatives and expertise in this area remain scarce. One issue that has to be addressed is the extent to which public–private partnerships (PPPs) may offer a way to create more local content and services that are targeted to the poor. Setting a common agenda that takes into account the dynamics of supply and demand for local content will help bring the various stakeholders together in finding better ways to solve the local content problem. It would be useful to make an inventory of best policy practices aimed at advancing local content.

D. Data privacy concerns

13. Another area of growing concern in today’s networked society relates to data privacy. Privacy concerns were not centre stage at WSIS, albeit privacy was considered important in the outcome documents of the summit.⁶ In the recent past, privacy has become one of the central themes of the emerging information society, not least in the light of the expanded role of search engines on the Web and of the fast spread of so-called social networking services (SNS). Data leaks and instances of cyber crime can cause significant harm to the general public, and the global information society has become more vulnerable to illegal and intrusive activities. There is also a perceived threat to the personal integrity of users from entrusting too much personal information in the hands of large corporations (e.g. Yahoo, Google, Facebook, MySpace (subsidiary of News Corp)). These issues are equally important for Internet users in developed and developing countries. Phishing and hacking technologies have made it possible to infiltrate and abuse users’ private information for unintended purposes. Moreover, trans-border data flows have the ability to circumvent national laws. Developing countries, owing to a lack of privacy laws that meet the standards set by their trading partners in developed countries, may also risk being discriminated against in the context of international trade.⁷

⁶ See <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>.

⁷ It is common that, in offshore outsourcing situations, data protection provisions are written into service contracts.

14. The main purpose of data protection legislation is to ensure that personal data are not processed without the knowledge and, except in certain cases, consent of the data subject. This is critical to ensure the accuracy of the personal data concerned and to enforce a set of standards for the processing of the information. There is considerable disagreement with regard to whether Internet Protocol (IP) addresses should be considered as confidential data or personal data. IP addresses allow search engines to identify and use the search history of a single user to offer personalized adverts and add the relevant commercial information to the search result page. Search engines (such as Google, Yahoo and MSN) argue that keeping such data private would impair their respective business models and undermine the quality of their search engines and services.⁸ Similarly, information watchdogs worldwide have questioned how SNS sites (such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo) handle personal data and whether the onus of protecting one's privacy should be entirely on the user. Such issues will grow in importance as the number of SNS users in developing countries expands in the coming years.⁹

15. These trends may suggest a need for more effective and up-to-date public policies and regulations at the international, regional, national and local levels. Cybersecurity and inadequate data privacy solutions are dealt with differently by countries with dissimilar priorities, challenges and levels of development. Many different national approaches have surfaced, but a global response to this truly global problem is yet to emerge. With the assistance of international organizations, notably UNCTAD and the United Nations regional commissions, developing countries and regions have started to establish effective laws and institutions for data protection, as part of their efforts to prepare cyberlaws and to increase their participation in the information society. More work is needed to raise awareness of data privacy and confidentiality issues while acknowledging cultural, social and economic differences to guarantee the rights and privacy concerns of Internet users in the South.

II. Implementation and follow-up at the regional and international levels

A. Implementation and follow-up at the regional level

16. United Nations regional commissions continue to support WSIS implementation through regional action plans.¹⁰ A broad range of activities has been reported, including facilitation of the sharing of best practice experiences at the regional level, support to national Governments in policy development, e-services deployment, and various capacity-building efforts.

1. Africa

17. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) continued its implementation of WSIS outcomes at the national, subregional and regional levels. In cooperation with the Governments of Canada and Finland, it provided assistance for the promotion of enabling policy and regulatory environment; the elaboration of regulatory frameworks, the development of national information and communication infrastructure plans and sectoral

⁸ For more information, see, e.g., <http://www.eff.org/issues/search-engines>.

⁹ In China, for example, the total number of users of local leading SNS sites is expected to reach 110 million in 2009 and 180 million by 2010.

¹⁰ See *Report of the Secretary-General on promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society* (E/CN.16/2007/2) for details.

strategies with regard to e-Government, e-health, e-education and e-commerce. An increasing number of African countries and regional economic communities have established and implemented e-strategies and initiatives in line with the goals and objectives of the African Information Society Initiative, the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy and the WSIS.¹¹

18. Regional ICT frameworks achieved substantial results with support from ECA. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern African State (COMESA) ICT Strategy was presented at the Sixth Meeting of Association of Regulators of Information and Communications for Eastern and Southern Africa /COMESA Telecommunications and IT Committee in Egypt on 24 and 25 February 2008. Similarly, ICT ministers of the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) in Praia, Cape Verde on 16 October 2008 adopted legal texts on cyber crime and personal data protection. ICT ministers of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC) in Brazzaville on 21 November 2008 adopted a Regulatory Framework for ICT within the CEMAC 2010 ICT Strategy.

19. Seven Academia Research Networks involving 20 African universities were put in place and are undertaking research on the legal and regulatory environment for (a) ICT policy implementation; (b) local content; (c) open source software; (d) mobile devices for m-payment; (e) m-health; and (f) inter-university information system for socio-economic development.

20. During 2008, more than 400 Members of Parliament benefited from capacity-building activities on the role of parliaments in building an inclusive information society.¹² A regional workshop on mobile and e-government, involving Regional Economic Communities and national e-government focal points, was organized with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) in Addis Ababa 17–19 February 2009.

21. ECA and the African network of the Global Alliance on ICT and Development (GAID) launched a survey on the follow-up to and the implementation of the WSIS outcome in Africa. Moreover, ECA, GAID and the African Union in April 2008 jointly organized a regional workshop on WSIS follow-up, at which member States and relevant stakeholders reviewed the output of the survey and agreed on a follow-up mechanism and plan for ongoing review.

2. Asia and the Pacific

22. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) continued to assist its member States with WSIS implementation and promoted the exchange of best practices at the regional level, especially on creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment for the information society.

23. During the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, organized by ESCAP in November 2008, member States identified their major priorities and

¹¹ In 2008, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Niger developed sectoral ICT policy implementation plans; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and Togo continued the ICT policy development process and Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique benefited from development of national cybersecurity frameworks. Studies on the role of ICTs in trade and economic growth and on the role of m-commerce were carried out in Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. A study was undertaken on the role of mobile phones in trade and banking in Kenya, Senegal and South Africa.

¹² Parliamentary ICT committees were created in the Gambia, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

formulated a programme of work for 2010-2011 aimed at (a) providing access to ICT in rural areas; (b) enhancing Pacific connectivity; (c) using ICT for disaster risk reduction; and (d) monitoring WSIS implementation. The session of the Committee was preceded by an Expert Group Meeting entitled “WSIS+5 and Emerging Issues in Asia and the Pacific”.

24. In promoting the implementation of the WSIS action line “Capacity-Building and Technical Cooperation”, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) – under the supervision of the ESCAP secretariat – undertook a series of activities and produced various training materials in 2008. The roll-out of the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders continued through partnerships with national government and training institutions, as well as sub-regional organizations.¹³ Three subregional workshops were held for South-East Asia, South Asia, and Western and Central Asia, to solicit feedback on the academic modules, as well as a regional training of trainers. The first national roll-out took place in Mongolia in December where a Continuing Education Programme with the eight academy modules was to be offered starting from March 2009. In the Pacific Islands, a subregional academy workshop was held in September in the Cook Islands. The modules will be translated into six languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Russian, Mongolian, Dari, Pashtun and French.¹⁴

25. APCICT also organized 10 training courses, a global forum in conjunction with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ministerial meeting, and an expert group meeting on the development of the Academy. In total, 440 participants representing Government, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector from almost 40 different countries, of which 112 were female, participated in APCICT’s events. In addition, APCICT launched the e-Collaborative Hub (e-Co Hub) in June 2008, an interactive space for sharing knowledge and experiences on ICT4D.¹⁵

26. APCICT released five knowledge products on ICT human resources capacity. They include an analytical report on the status, trends, policies and strategies of ICT human resources development in the Asia-Pacific region, and a research report on the development of ICT human resources capacity indicators. Two publications on the applications of ICT for development were also developed together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and disaster management. Lastly, in support of the Korea Information Society Development Institute, the inaugural issue of a journal entitled, *ICT World Today* was published to share best practices and information on regional ICT trends and development and South-South collaborations.

27. Consultative Meetings for the Establishment of Regional Knowledge Network of Telecentres were held in Azerbaijan and in Bangkok, culminating in the establishment of the Central Asia Network of Telecentres and the Asia Pacific Network of Telecentres. As part of the technical cooperation project “Empowering the Rural Area through Community E-centres”, a subregional workshop was organized in April 2008, in New Delhi, followed by the National Stakeholders’ Consultation Workshop in Dhaka on Empowering Rural Areas through Community e-Centers in June 2008.

28. Although high-income economies in Asia and the Pacific are leaders in the usage and diffusion of various technologies, the ESCAP region as a whole is still lagging. In order to make significant progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals

¹³ For further information see <http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/default.asp?idioma=IN>.

¹⁴ The centre was also working with the ECA on the development of an African version of the academy launched on 3 March 2009.

¹⁵ See <http://www.unapcict.org/ecohub>.

(MDGs) and WSIS goals, expanding connectivity and ICT access remain regional priorities. With enhanced ICT access, especially among least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDSs), ICT applications should be able to deliver developmental gains to people and communities, as envisaged in the WSIS outcome documents in a more systematic and sustainable manner.

3. Western Asia

29. Aimed at helping Governments and stakeholders update and fine-tune their ICT strategies and implementation plans, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) produces bi-annually a publication entitled *Regional Profile of the Information Society in Western Asia*, which is compiled from national profiles. In order to improve the quality and the accuracy of information for the 2009 edition, ESCWA held a Consultative Workshop on the National Profiles of the Information Society in Western Asia in November 2008.

30. The Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities project, which is implemented by the United Nations regional commissions under the leadership of ESCWA, seeks to empower poor and disadvantaged communities by transforming selected existing ICT access points into networked hubs of knowledge. In 2008, project activities included the design of a knowledge network portal and the preparation of regional and global “knowledge strategies” for the telecentre transformation and networking process. A training workshop for telecentre staff was organized on the usage of the newly-designed portal, as well as on marketing and knowledge management concepts.

31. In the light of the difficult situation in Iraq, ESCWA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acting as partners of the initiative ICT for Education in Iraq, facilitated capacity-building sessions on education strategy formulation, International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) instructor training as well as the creation of courseware aimed at teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speaking Iraqi schoolchildren. This also involved the procurement and installation of equipment for the creation of ICT training centers in five Iraqi governorates as well as the provision of equipment for 10 ICT labs in both boys’ and girls’ schools.

32. During 2008, ESCWA organized a workshop entitled Cyber Legislation and its Implementation in the ESCWA Region. The workshop resulted in a proposed list of actions that focus on building the capacity of the region’s legislators and a call for the formulation and development of laws which promote the regional harmonization of cyber legislation.

33. In an effort to encourage and assist Governments in the creation of citizen-friendly ICT applications, UN-DESA and ESCWA in November 2008 organized a three-day capacity-building workshop entitled Electronic/Mobile Government (e/m-government) in Arab States: Building Capacity in Knowledge Management through Partnership. The workshop identified the main areas of e/m-government, explored the issues and challenges facing the development of related applications and delved into government ICT strategies for the region.

34. In preparing the groundwork for the establishment of the “.arab” domain name, collaborative efforts were undertaken with international domain name players, such as AFILIAS and the Public Interest Registry, as well as with communities using languages based on the Arabic script, such as Persian and Urdu. In addition, the Arabic Script in Internationalized Domain Names Working Group (ASIWG) was formed. It assembles experts from various Arab- and non-Arabic-speaking countries in addition to experts from

the UNICODE and the Internet Engineering Task Force community.¹⁶ Two ASIWG meetings (May and November) were co-organized by ESCWA. They set the rules for cooperation, defined issues, researched solutions for technical problems pertaining to the use of Arabic script in domain names, and proposed solutions for such issues as the use of diacritics, numerals and honorifics.

35. As a member of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, ESCWA carried out during 2008 several activities aimed at achieving the partnership's objectives. In addition to the Regional Profiles activity described above in the action line section, ESCWA organized during April 2008, in collaboration with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and ITU, a training workshop in Amman on Measuring ICT Indicators. The workshop provided training on data collection of the core list of ICT indicators including indicators on ICT infrastructure, access to and use of ICT by households and individuals, use of ICT by businesses, as well as on trade in ICT goods.

4. Latin America and the Caribbean

36. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) continued its implementation of WSIS outcomes at the national, subregional and regional levels. In cooperation with the Government of Canada and the European Commission through the @LIS 2 Programme "Alliance for the Information Society", it provided assistance for the promotion of enabling policy and regulatory environment, the design of regulatory framework proposals and the development of national ICT agendas and sectoral strategies with regard to e-education, e-health, e-government, e-access and e-productivity in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. An increasing number of Latin American and Caribbean countries adopted and implemented ICT strategies and initiatives in line with the goals and objectives of the Latin America and Caribbean Action Plan (eLAC), following the WSIS action lines.¹⁷

37. Member States of ECLAC began the adoption of a second phase of the eLAC for the period of 2008–2010 (eLAC2010), which included adjustments in terms of capabilities in, access to, and use of ICTs in education and training, infrastructure and access, health, public administration and e-government, productive sector, and policy instruments and strategic tools. It recommended renewing the mandate of the majority of the eLAC2007 Working Groups on infrastructure, creative industries, telework, financing, Internet governance, software and legislative and legal frameworks. It also solicited the creation of four new groups in e-health, ICTs and disability, technological waste and gender.

38. ECLAC continued in 2008 to facilitate policymakers in embracing technology-enabled opportunities through publishing 20 studies, 4 books related to different relevant ICT issues for the region, and a bi-annual publication entitled *Latin America and Caribbean Digital Review* that was compiled from national profiles, aimed at helping Governments and stakeholders update and fine-tune their ICT strategies and implementation plans.¹⁸ ECLAC continued also to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to the countries in the region.

39. Significant efforts were devoted to providing assistance to national statistical authorities to compile harmonized ICT indicators. In 2008 the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC), implemented by ECLAC with the financial support from the International Development Research Center of

¹⁶ See <http://unicode.org/>.

¹⁷ For further information see <http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/default.asp?idioma=IN>.

¹⁸ Available for download at <http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/publicaciones/default.asp?idioma=IN>.

Canada, organized the IV Regional Workshop on Information Society Measurement in El Salvador. Two workshops on ICT and Education Measurement took place with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics input. OSILAC published more than 10 related documents and organized capacity-building workshops on the implementation of ICT statistics.¹⁹ For these activities, ECLAC had the support of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, being a member of its steering committee. ECLAC developed an ICT statistical information system that integrates indicators on household ICT usage from Latin American and Caribbean countries, and maintained the PROTIC database, which allows the exchange of experiences and the creation of synergies between ongoing projects in the region.²⁰

5. Europe and the ECE region

40. Under the framework of the Aarhus Convention, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) continued in 2008 to work towards increased public access to environmental information and public participation in decision-making, so as to strengthen the protection of the environment.²¹ The Aarhus Convention Parties adopted a decision on electronic information tools that encourages countries to develop adequately resourced national programmes and strategies for e-participation in environmental decision-making. It also extended the mandate of the convention's Task Force on Electronic Information Tools and its clearinghouse mechanism to promote shared approaches to and standards for systems providing public access to environmental information.

41. Under its Committee on Trade, ECE continues to undertake work aimed at facilitating national and international transactions through the simplification and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows through a working party, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). In 2008, UN/CEFACT significantly expanded its cooperation with the Latin American and African regions through its first meetings in Mexico in April, and in Senegal in November. These initiatives will greatly enhance the exchange of paperless trade information, both nationally and internationally, in the respective regions.

42. ECE supports ICT policy development in the economies of Central Asia through the United Nations Special Programme on the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Under this programme, it has since 2008 taken the lead to establish the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development. ECE conducted a number of regional and national capacity-building seminars on ICT policy and legal issues, with special reference to e-commerce.

43. ECE continues to promote safer, more efficient and environmentally-friendly transport by incorporating provisions into international legal instruments which allow the use of ICTs, i.e. through e-commerce, e-environment, e-employment and e-safety. In 2008, the computerization of Transport Internationaux Routiers (TIR) carnets continued to be implemented with member Governments and through collaboration with other stakeholders. Application of ICTs is leading the advances in e-environment and e-safety in new vehicle technologies.

¹⁹ So far, 17 countries have already adopted OSILAC's suggestion for ICT access indicators in their regular household surveys, 10 countries for ICT usage and 7 countries have additionally adopted OSILAC's suggestions for ICT indicators in enterprise surveys.

²⁰ Available at <http://www.cepal.org/tic/flash/default.asp?idioma=IN>; see also www.protic.org.

²¹ The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (adopted in June 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark).

B. Implementation and follow-up at the international level

1. General Assembly

44. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/182 of 31 January 2008, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, through the Economic and Social Council, the present report being prepared for the CSTD on the status of implementation of and follow-up of the summit. At its second plenary meeting, on 19 September 2008, the General Assembly decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Information and communication technologies for development" and to allocate it to the Second Committee. In its consideration of the item, the Second Committee had before it the following documents: (a) Report of the Secretary-General on the 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 (A/63/72-E/2008/48); and (b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/130, including the recommendations of the tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/63/180).

45. On 19 December 2008, the General Assembly took up the report on information and communication technologies for development (document A/63/411), and adopted, by consensus, a resolution on that subject (A/RES/63/202). The General Assembly welcomed the Connect Africa initiative of ITU, noted that for the majority of the poor, the developmental promises of science and technology, including ICTs, remains unfulfilled, and emphasized the need to effectively harness technology, including ICTs, to bridge the digital divide. It recognized the important role of ICTs in providing solutions to development challenges and that ICTs can foster economic growth and competitiveness, and can contribute to poverty eradication and social inclusion. It (a) stressed the role of Governments in the design of public policies; (b) recognized the important role of the private sector; (c) recognized the potential of ICTs for technology transfer; (d) acknowledged the continuing gender divide; (e) recalled the improvements and innovations in financial mechanisms; (f) encouraged strengthened and continuing cooperation among all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the outcomes of WSIS; (g) recognized the role of ICTs as a catalyst for the achievement of the MDGs; (h) requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2009 a report on the process of enhanced cooperation; and (i) invited member States to contribute to the trust fund created to ensure meaningful participation of all stakeholders at the Internet Governance Forums in 2009 and 2010. It finally requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its sixty-fourth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the status of implementation and follow-up of the resolution.

2. Economic and Social Council

46. Under its item on science and technology for development, the Economic and Social Council adopted on 18 July 2008 resolution 2008/3 and the four draft decisions contained in the Report on the eleventh session of the CSTD (document E/2008/31). Resolution 2008/3 assessed progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the WSIS. The four decisions were on (a) participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society entities in the work of the CSTD at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions; (b) participation of academic entities in the work of that commission; (c) a report of the Secretary-General on science, technology and innovation to be submitted to the commission at its twelfth session; and (d) the report of the commission on its eleventh session and the provisional agenda and documentation for the twelfth session of the commission.

3. United Nations Group on the Information Society

47. Under the chairmanship of ITU, the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) held its third meeting on 18 September 2008, with representatives from FAO, ILO, ITU, UN-CEB, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNODC, UNRWA, UPU and WHO. Participants took note that UNDP did not wish to act as chair of UNGIS, but would nominate a high-level representative for liaison. The group approved that the chairmanship would therefore rotate in the future between ITU and UNESCO, and confirmed UNCTAD as second vice chair for 2009. Participants were briefed about the outcomes of the action line facilitators meeting held on 23 May 2008 and the open consultations on the 2009 cluster of WSIS-related events held on 15 September 2008 (see below). The group confirmed, at the request of UNDP, that ITU would take over the facilitation of action line C6 and agreed on the possible taking over of action line C7 (e-environment) by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UNGIS discussed different proposals for the best way to organize the 2009 cluster of events, without taking a final decision. Participants were informed about the Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/3 and especially its paragraph 32. On this matter, the Chair invited participants to send their views to the secretariat. The group finally discussed the relation between UNGIS and the United Nations Development Group, and how to achieve a better integration of strategies and actions harnessing ICTs for Development into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the Common Country Assessments.

4. Action line facilitation

48. The third action line facilitators meeting was held on 23 May 2008, chaired by ITU, UNESCO and UNDP. Participants reported on the different action line facilitation meetings and discussed ways to strengthen the process. There was general agreement that the cluster of WSIS-related events should be concentrated into one week and that it might be more attractive to discuss a number of themes instead of the different action lines. Some participants proposed to create a steering committee for each action line and even a global multi-stakeholder advisory group for the WSIS cluster week.²²

49. With a view to analyse WSIS follow-up challenges and explore new paths, ITU and UNESCO co-chaired the Open Consultation Meeting on the 2009 Cluster of WSIS-related events on 15 September 2008. The meeting was well attended and discussions focused on the need to reformat the cluster of WSIS-related events. Some participants remained in favour of organizing the meetings around themes rather than action lines. Others recalled that the action lines were endorsed by heads of States and Governments and should not be substituted by themes. Some suggestions were made to organize workshops on a number of themes in parallel with the action line facilitation meetings. It was agreed that an online consultation would be undertaken to discuss further the name of the cluster and the organization of the next meeting in May 2009.²³

5. Civil society, business and multi-stakeholder partnerships

50. During 2008, numerous conferences, seminars and publications were undertaken by civil society, business and multi-stakeholder partnerships. For example, the Information Society Project at Yale Law School hosted the Third Access to Knowledge Conference (A2K3) September 8–10, 2008, in Geneva. The meeting focused on the A2K movement, A2K and human rights, A2K and the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO's) development agenda, A2K and international trade, copyright exceptions and limitations,

²² For details see the summary at http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=241010.

²³ For details see the summary at http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=241110.

open business models, technologies for access, open access to scientific literature, and related themes.²⁴ MobileActive.org and SANGONet organized a conference 13–15 October 2008 in Johannesburg, with the theme of “Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Technology for Social Impact” – the largest international civil society event to date on this topic. At the third IGF Forum in Hyderabad, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Instituto del Tercer Mundo launched the *Global Information Society Watch Report 2008*.²⁵ Building Communication Opportunities, a partnership between four bilateral development agencies and six international NGOs, published a study on the Impact of Information and Communications on Development.²⁶

51. During 2008, GAID focused its attention on helping to mainstream ICT into the broader United Nations Development Agenda, including the MDGs, and on helping developing countries to integrate ICT into their national development strategies and programmes. Together with the Global Compact and other United Nations entities, GAID co-organized on 24 September 2008 at the United Nations Headquarters the first-ever United Nations Private Sector Forum, which provided a platform for securing specific pledges of support from technology and business leaders in developing a long-term response to the global food crisis and endemic poverty.

52. In 2008, the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT), a GAID partnership initiative, continued to mobilize multi-stakeholder cooperation for promoting ICT solutions and standardization for people with disabilities. A Joint United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)/G3ICT/GAID Seminar on Implementing the Digital Accessibility Agenda of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Challenges and Opportunities for Signatory States, held on 3 December 2008 in New York culminated in a two-year programme, contributing to the rapid and effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular its article 9, which calls for a universal framework for addressing the accessibility of ICTs and assistive technologies.

53. The Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and its BASIS (Business Action to Support the Information Society) initiative remains a privileged interlocutor in the WSIS implementation and follow-up process. In 2008, ICC submitted several position papers, especially with regard to Internet governance.

6. United Nations entities

54. A wide range of programme activities have been reported by entities in the United Nations system in WSIS implementation and follow-up. In carrying out these activities, United Nations entities have worked closely with national Governments, regional commissions and other stakeholders, including NGOs and the private sector.

(a) Implementation of action lines

(i) *The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development (C1)*

55. In the effort to promote worldwide knowledge sharing, information dissemination and state-of-the-art research on e/m-government development, UN-DESA, through the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), underpinned

²⁴ Most proceedings and resources are available at <http://a2k3.org/>.

²⁵ See <http://www.giswatch.org/gisw2008/GISW2008.html>.

²⁶ The full study is available at http://www.bcoalliance.org/system/files/BCO_FinalReport.pdf.

in early 2008 the content and operation features of the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN). DPADM also launched the United Nations Electronic/Mobile Government Knowledge Repository, a “free” and openly accessible online facility attempting to gather cross-sectoral national and international stakeholders and United Nations agencies in a partnership for knowledge sharing to further the capacities of national Governments in e/m-government development and to achieve national e-solutions. Moreover, DPADM published the first volume of the Compendium of ICT Applications on Electronic Government.

56. On the eve of the third IGF in December 2008, UN-DESA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and ITU, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, organized the Second Parliamentary Forum on Shaping the Information Society: the Role of Parliaments and Legislators. Key themes included online child protection, cybercrime and privacy. Parliamentarians were encouraged to bring a parliamentary dimension to the discussions on Internet governance.

57. UN-DESA, IPU and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament released the World e-Parliament Report 2008, which represents a first assessment of how ICTs are being employed across the array of activities for which a parliament is responsible. It was based on a survey of 105 assemblies. Building on the results of the report, UN-DESA, the European Parliament and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament organized the World e-Parliament Conference 2008. At the conference, UN-DESA, in collaboration with the People’s Assembly of Egypt, launched the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network to promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing and mutual support among parliamentary administrations of African parliaments on an ongoing basis on legislative processes, research and ICT.

58. During 2008, ITU organized the Global Symposium for Regulators and Global Industry Leaders Forum (February, Thailand), the Global Symposium on the Human Capacity-Building (July, United Kingdom), and the ITU TELECOM Telecommunication Development Symposium and Youth Forum (September, Thailand).

(ii) *Information and communication infrastructure (C2)*

59. ITU organized five forums and various regional workshops in 2008 to raise awareness about standards and to reduce the standardization gap between developed and developing countries.²⁷ Moreover, the Global Symposium on Standardization was held on 20 October. The World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly approved, among others, resolution 76 on Conformance and Interoperability Testing. Together with the introduction of an ITU mark for equipment and services, it could help enhance the interoperability as requested by developing countries.

60. With regard to radio communications, areas that are actively being studied by the ITU include wireless Internet access, emergency radio communications, remote sensing systems and digital broadcasting.

(iii) *Access to information and knowledge (C3)*

61. In 2008, UNESCO focused its action through the formulation of a policy framework and the reinforcement of infostructures in the areas of information literacy, information preservation and information accessibility. UNESCO continued its efforts at strengthening the role of libraries and education institutions as key players for fostering information-

²⁷ The forums were held in Brasilia (May), Accra (May), Tashkent (June), Damascus (July) and Hanoi (September).

literate societies, particularly by focusing on raising awareness on the importance of integrating information literacy work into curricula. Under the Memory of the World Programme and its Registers, UNESCO safeguarded original material and raised awareness about the importance of heritage and memory. The World Digital Library was expanded to serve as a framework for national and regional developments. Special emphasis was given to promoting the availability of diverse and multilingual content on the Internet. UNESCO also promoted access to scientific information and educational resources through open access and content policies and the increased use of open-source tools in all areas of UNESCO's competence.

62. ITU held numerous workshops, conferences and symposia, making extensive materials freely and widely available on the Web, including information portals, practical ICT toolkits and online databases. With a view to deepen its dialogue with academia and universities, ITU organized a series of conferences on standardization related issues. The first Kaleidoscope event, Innovations in NGN (May, Geneva), sought to link universities to ITU's activities and studies on new and emerging technologies. A second Kaleidoscope, Innovations for Digital Inclusion will take place 31 August–1 September 2009 in Argentina.

63. WIPO promotes the role of intellectual property rights in enhancing wider and more user-friendly distribution of content as a tool for reducing the "digital divide". To carry out work related to the WIPO Development Agenda, the 2007 WIPO General Assembly established a new Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP). During its second session in July 2008, the committee discussed possible activities to meet the Development Agenda goals in the field of copyright, including the following: (a) activities to promote understanding of problems related to identification of public domain material (e.g. orphan works, use of rights management technologies, the role of search engines); (b) a possible study on the public domain; and (c) activities on new approaches to copyright licensing (e.g. creative commons, open-source software), including co-existence with more traditional commercial or proprietary licensing models.²⁸ Discussions will continue during the third session of the Committee in April and May 2009.

(iv) *Capacity-building (C4)*

64. DESA and IPU, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, started to develop a legal repository aimed at gathering legislation from different countries on emerging ICT issues in order to facilitate the sharing of legislative practices. The repository currently contains legislation from over 70 countries on six main topics (child online protection, cybercrime, open standards, privacy, freedom of information and e-accessibility). DPADM supported several technical cooperation activities aimed at strengthening the internal capacity of Governments to use ICT for a more effective and efficient service delivery and for improved service outputs.²⁹

(v) *Building confidence and security in the use of ICT (C5)*

65. Work continued under the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA). The momentum generated by the GCA and the broad nature of this ITU initiative have resulted in interest from other stakeholders and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. ITU carried out significant work in security architecture, encryption and authentication and information security management systems. ITU in 2008 issued a number of security-related

²⁸ See http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/mdocs/en/cdip_2/cdip_2_4_prov_2.doc.

²⁹ As part of its "Capacity Building Initiative on ICT for Development", in 2008 DPADM provided assistance for the implementation of e-government projects in Belize and Ghana.

recommendations, as well as the ICT Security Standards Roadmap – a database for approved ICT security standards. The ITU, the European Network and Information Security Agency and the Network and Information Security Steering Group produced a manual entitled *Security in Telecommunications and Information Technology*.

66. In 2008, a High-Level Segment of the ITU Council provided Ministers and Councilors from member States the occasion to exchange views on Cybersecurity and Climate Change. The council also adopted the (modified) resolution 1282 on ITU's role in implementing WSIS outcomes.

67. Within the framework of the Network of Centres of Excellence, sponsored by the Government of Italy,³⁰ UNCTAD, in close collaboration with the Tunisian National Agency for Computer Security (NACS), organized a training session on Cybersecurity in Tunis, Tunisia, in October 2008. The training session offered an opportunity to a large number of African ICT specialists and engineers to upgrade their skills regarding the technical aspects of cybercrime and computer security, and to increase their awareness on broader cybersecurity challenges and related policies.

(vi) *Enabling environment (C6)*

68. A new module on Universal Access and Service was launched on the ITU-infoDev ICT Regulation Toolkit, a Web-based tool that provides regulators, policymakers, telecom service providers, sector experts and the general public with updates on regulatory topics, best practices and case studies.

69. A series of regional regulatory meetings, workshops, training events and direct assistance activities were carried out. The Eighth Global Symposium for Regulators took place in Pattaya, Thailand, from 11 to 13 March 2008, and produced a set of best practice guidelines on innovative infrastructure sharing and open access strategies to promote affordable access for all.

70. Under the Global Capacity-Building Initiative – which was launched in 2007 by ITU, infoDev and the World Bank – a training programme for regulators was delivered in 2008 focusing on costing methodologies and cost calculation.

71. UNCTAD continued to assist Governments of developing countries with ICT policies conducive to their increased participation in the information economy. This included support in monitoring the information economy, preparing and reviewing national ICT policies and initiatives, and preparing legal frameworks supportive of the development of e-commerce and realization of e-government services. UNCTAD promoted, through its Law Reform Programme, harmonized regional cyberlaws, preparing comparative review of cyberlaws and building capacities of different stakeholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America. UNCTAD facilitated three meetings of the East African Community Task Force on Cyberlaws to ultimately prepare a legal framework for the harmonization of cyberlaws in the region. In Asia, technical assistance was primarily offered to Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Additional capacity-building activities are needed for policymakers and parliamentarians to enhance their understanding of the legal implications of ICT before processing and enacting the cyberlaws in compliance with the e-ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) initiative.³¹ In Latin America, some 100 government and private sector representatives from member countries of the Latin

³⁰ <http://www.unctad.org/noce>.

³¹ For more information about the regional harmonization of cyberlaws in the ASEAN, see the *Information Economy Report 2007/2008*.

American Integration Association (ALADI) were trained through distance learning and face-to-face training workshops on the legal implications of ICT.

72. As part of the seventeenth session of the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights in WIPO, held in November 2008, several presentations were made on the limitations and exceptions to copyright, and the need for specific user groups – such as visually-impaired persons, libraries and archives, and educational institutions – to have access to digital content under reasonable conditions and in accessible formats. WIPO member States acknowledged the special needs of these specific user groups and stressed the importance of addressing those needs, especially in LDCs. The WIPO secretariat will prepare a questionnaire on limitations and exceptions related to educational activities, libraries and archives, provisions for disabled persons, as well as digital technology in the field of copyright.

(vii) *ICT applications (C7)*

a. E-government

73. UN-DESA/DPADM in 2008 organized various capacity-building workshops in back office management for e/m-government, and in the implementation of e-government services, policies, strategies and solutions (Shanghai, 27–28 May; Beirut, 18–20 November). DPADM also strengthened the technical capacity of the UNPAN Online Training Centre with a governance and public administration learning content management system encompassing up to 15 online, multi-language courses on public administration. During 2008, the courses were delivered to 1,525 participants from around the world. In partnership with the Centre for Technology in Government, University of Albany, and Microsoft, DPADM finalized the development of METER2, an interactive Web-based tool to assist Governments in monitoring and refining their enabling environment for e-government.

74. In 2008, DPADM published the *United Nations E-Government Survey 2008: From E-Government to Connected Governance*, a comparative analysis of the e-government readiness of the 192 member States. The survey focuses on e-government initiatives directed at improving operational efficiency through the integration of back-office functions.³² An Expert Group Meeting on the E-Government Survey: Getting to the Next Level was organized in New York, on 11–12 December, with the purpose of reviewing and validating the survey questions in the effort of enhancing the quantitative part of the survey by developing five sets of measurable, additional/revised e-government indicators.

b. E-business

75. In 2008, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), ITU and the Governments of India and Bhutan carried out a progress review of their common telekiosks project.³³ This project – funded by the Indian Government, Bhutan Post, Bhutan Telecom, ITU and UPU – involved computerizing 38 selected post offices with equipment provided by ITU and UPU and creating a local area network that serves the entire postal network in Bhutan. So far, the main beneficiaries of the project were students using telekiosks to access their examination results and search for information. Telekiosks have also facilitated the use of e-government services and have been widely used by foreign workers for the renewal of work permits.

³² The following countries requested and funded DPADM's advisory service missions to strengthen their respective e-government capacities to develop solutions and services, as well as policies and strategies: Bahrain, Colombia (October 2008), Lesotho (June 2008), Oman (May and November 2008), and Singapore (June 2008).

³³ http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/tech/RuralTelecom/UPU_Bhutan.pdf.

Among challenges identified are low-speed connectivity, maintenance and replacement of the equipment in mountainous areas, low literacy rate and the overall economic condition characterized by the lack of economic growth and diversity. A joint ITU/UPU/South Africa project will be launched in 2009 with the objective to improve connectivity in rural areas and underserved communities of Southern Africa.

76. UPU's International Financial System (IFS) network that provides within national post offices secure and affordable money transfer services to migrants, welcomed eight new countries in 2008, bringing the total number of countries exchanging remittances to 39. It is expected that a dozen more countries will join the network in 2009.

77. The twenty-fourth UPU Congress, held in August 2008, renewed its support to the implementation of WSIS outcomes and approved an Electronic Services Action Plan³⁴ to further enhance the deployment of electronic postal services. The plan recognizes the need for Governments to develop sector strategies aimed at improving the usage of electronic postal services and at assessing their impact on postal operators and their customers. It encourages Governments to use post offices as communication centres. It also urges UPU to assist Governments and postal operators in developing their e-services strategies and to promote global interoperability of electronic postal services. In addition, the Congress invited UPU member countries to consider the contribution of the postal network when formulating national ICT policies, in particular in the areas of e-business and e-government.³⁵ Finally, the Congress approved a resolution aimed at facilitating e-commerce through the postal sector in developing and least developed countries. The UPU is currently investigating ways to strengthen the postal sector's capabilities to support underserved communities that wish to access domestic and cross border e-commerce marketplaces and e-trade gateways.³⁶

78. The International Trade Centre (ITC) continued in 2008 to promote and deploy e-business solutions and deliver advisory services to SMEs through its Certified Trade Advisors Network in developing countries. At the project level, ITC harnessed the potential of mobile technologies to strengthen the competitiveness of exporters in selected countries. Internet marketing and e-commerce-related capacity-building was undertaken by ITC in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Morocco while advisory services for using ICT to enhance exporter competitiveness were given to SMEs in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda. ITC finalized its evaluation of the potential of e-commerce applied to the field of digital content with the Trade in Sounds seed funding, in partnership with WIPO.³⁷

79. In order to promote e-business at the level of the SME, ITC is further exploring the potential of mobile communications. A business-matching application is being deployed in Liberia, allowing market women and women farmers to exchange trade leads over a General packet radio service (GPRS)-based application. ITC will also complete its four Online2Export e-commerce training modules, with various supports being used for capacity-building. Obstacles encountered are related to the lack of significant resources available for innovative technology-based projects. In particular, since projects funds were allocated to specific geographies, adopting a multi-stakeholder approach and engaging with various United Nations agencies proved to be difficult. ITC experienced over-selling vendor behaviour in beneficiary countries, where Web agencies or IT companies do not adequately manage the expectations of their institutional clients. ITC recommends a

³⁴ Congress resolution C 33/2008.

³⁵ Congress resolution C 38/2008.

³⁶ Congress resolution C 28/2008.

³⁷ See <http://www.tradeinsounds.com/>.

strengthening of partnerships with the private sector, which must be increasingly sought in the WSIS follow-up and implementation process.

80. As the United Nations agency specifically mandated to promote the development of manufacturing industries, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) focuses its ICT-related development assistance on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The Refurbished Computer Programme was established in 2008 in partnership with Microsoft and with the active support of UNIDO's National Cleaner Production Centres. Its main goal is to provide entrepreneurs with access to affordable quality hardware, relevant software and adequate ICT training, and to manage the entire life cycle of used computers with local e-waste recycling solutions. The refurbished computer centre of excellence and e-waste model was successfully piloted in Uganda with the establishment of the privately funded Uganda Green Computer Company Limited. The Centre was inaugurated in June 2008 by the Prime Minister of Uganda and UNIDO's Director-General. The model is currently replicated in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

81. UNIDO and Hewlett-Packard established a partnership in May 2008 to collaborate on the deployment of the "Graduate Entrepreneurship Training through IT" (GET-IT) programme in Africa. GET-IT provides training on business and IT skills to unemployed youth and graduates in areas such as finance, management, marketing, operation and management by designated local NGOs. It has been implemented in six countries in Africa, and has been expanded in 2009 to additional countries in Africa and the Middle East. The overall goal of the programme is to reach 500,000 unemployed or underemployed students by 2010.

82. In the context of the local software industry initiative for Uganda, a local software development centre in East Africa will be established in 2009 – in close cooperation with Microsoft and the Government of Uganda – to act as a centre of excellence and incubator involving academia, industrial associations, the private sector and relevant public institutions.

c. E-health

83. The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Observatory on e-Health continues to monitor, analyse and report on developments and trends in e-Health.³⁸ Its second global survey is underway and will present country-specific information on the WSIS e-Health implementation for 2008. It will examine in greater detail areas such as policy, partnerships, infrastructure, funding, capacity-building, legal issues and the adoption of established and emerging applications, such as mobile health.

84. The improvement of health information systems is addressed through partnerships such as the Health Metrics Network (HMN).³⁹ During 2009, HMN will publish the third edition of its *Framework and Standards*, which is increasingly being adopted as a technical guide. Over 70 countries have so far received grants for intensified efforts to strengthen their health information systems with HMN and partner support. Obstacles to achieving widespread health information systems include the design, governance, funding and ability to manage complex ICT deployments. The health sector may need to invest considerable funds to harmonize standards and to ensure the interoperability that is required for efficient and effective exchange of health data.

³⁸ www.who.int/GOe/en.

³⁹ www.who.int/healthmetrics.

85. As action line facilitator, WHO recognizes the broad scope of ICT in health and the significant effort still required to meet the WSIS commitments. A priority for the coming years will be to address common concerns related to the legal and regulatory landscape, as well as the improvement of systems for monitoring disaster and emergency response. Addressing these concerns requires effective international collaboration and investment across sectors.

d. E-learning⁴⁰

86. UNESCO continued to support numerous e-learning initiatives in all regions of the world. Particular emphasis was put on offering capacity development opportunities for ministries of education, notably to develop ICT in education policies and plans. UNESCO trained over 400 policymakers and planners from 26 countries on planning for ICT in education integration. Higher education and teacher education institutions, as well as educators in community learning or multimedia centres, benefited directly from these e-learning activities. The work undertaken on Open Educational Resources (OER) – with the support of the Hewlett Foundation – offered a unique opportunity to over 600 participants from 90 countries to learn about OER and discuss key topics on a regular basis. This group deliberation resulted in a publication, *The Way Forward*, on the priority areas to advance the OER movement. Encouraged by discussions around the “\$100 laptop”/One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative, UNESCO co-facilitated with the World Bank and infoDev the e-learning WSIS follow-up May 2008 meeting on “Low-cost ICT Devices for Education” with 70 participants from the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Concrete cooperation between different players emerged. InfoDev and UNESCO will launch a discussion forum on the topic before the next Geneva WSIS events in May 2009.

87. In 2008, the Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) e-learning initiative continued to expand, providing on-the-job training through a curriculum of 113 lessons in 5 modules for technicians and managers at national and local levels. IMARK provides an interactive self-paced learning environment in which new concepts, approaches and attitudes for effective information management can be learnt. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and a wide range of national and regional partners facilitate the uptake of all of these materials, which have now reached over 75,000 individuals.⁴¹

e. E-environment

88. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is committed to the promotion, coordination and support of implementation of ICTs for improving global, regional and national production, exchange and distribution of information and warnings on weather, climate and water.

89. In e-environment, WMO continued in 2008 to establish monitoring systems, using ICTs, to forecast and monitor the impact of natural and man-made disasters. The functional architecture and technical compliance standards of the WMO Information System (WIS), which collects and shares weather, water and climate information for all WMO and related international programmes, were refined and published in 2008. As of December, 36 countries were nominating WIS centres, including 13 Global Information and System Centres (GISCs) and over 80 Data Collection or Production Centres. These candidate centres will be presented to the Commission for Basic Systems to ensure compliance with

⁴⁰ See also C4.

⁴¹ For more information visit: www.imarkgroup.org.

the WIS standards and their long-term sustainability. The first of the new WIS GISCs is expected to become operational during 2009, with other centres coming online in 2010.

90. In the context of its promotion of the use of the Common Alerting Protocol for early warning and emergency applications, WMO – in collaboration with ITU and OASIS – held a successful implementers workshop in December 2008. WMO members England, France and the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting also organized a successful workshop in November 2008 on the use of Geographical Information Systems utilizing international standards, such as OGC/ISO Web mapping and Web feature services, for enabling system to system data exchange in support of decision-making and warning systems.

91. Solving the E-Waste Problem (StEP) is a multi-stakeholder initiative coordinated by the United Nations University in partnership with UNEP, UNCTAD and UNIDO (joined in 2008), in view of the need to foster societies capable of sustainably mitigating the environmental consequences resulting from the production, usage and disposal of ICT goods. The initiative seeks to develop just and environmentally safe solutions for the e-waste problem through analysis, planning and pilot projects. In 2008, StEP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the secretariat of the Basel Convention that set the foundations for effective collaboration in research, capacity development, policy and outreach. In addition, StEP was, inter alia, supported by UNEP to carry out a scientific research project entitled “Recycling— from e-waste to resources”. StEP also assigned the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe as its focal point for the Middle East and North Africa Region. Discussions are underway to establish more regional focal points.

f. E-science

92. The last e-science action line facilitator meeting was devoted to “access to scientific knowledge and dissemination”, particularly for developing countries. Participants echoed their support in favour of “open access” to scientific information.

93. A major obstacle for science education in Africa is the lack of qualified and trained science teachers. UNESCO’s Science Sector launched a project called the African Virtual, which enhances the capacity of member States in sub-Saharan Africa to train such teachers through e-learning. In 2008, UNESCO provided training in the pedagogy of online module production, in e-learning and distance learning to 90 university lecturers from 10 French-speaking countries of West Africa. Centres were created and equipped with infrastructure in Benin and Senegal.

94. WMO continued to promote the long-term systematic and efficient collection, dissemination and preservation of essential scientific digital information, for example, meteorological data, in all countries. A special achievement in 2008 was the development of a gateway between two very popular search standards (ISO 23950 – Search and Retrieval via URL and Catalogue Search for Web), significantly facilitating the discovery of data and relevant information for science.

95. In 2008, Research4Life was launched as a corporate identity for three PPP programmes providing access to 4,500 scientific journals, several major databases, and online books and reference works, with content available in 15 languages. These programmes are: Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA), the Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) for Health, and Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE). The programmes bring together more than 100 publishers, three United Nations organizations, two major universities, philanthropic foundations, technology partners and others, with the single goal of improving access to and training on essential information for life where it is most needed and least affordable. All partners

involved in the programmes have committed to continuing these programmes until at least 2015, to tie in with the timeline of the United Nations MDGs. The online portals of the three programmes include subject-specific content necessary to improve conditions in developing countries, in health, agriculture, food security, and the environment, all core to the MDGs. Access is provided free or at very low cost to researchers, educators, policymakers, librarians and students in almost 4,000 publicly-funded institutions in 114 of the world's poorest countries.

g. E-agriculture

96. The e-Agriculture Community of Expertise is a global initiative launched by FAO to enhance the role of ICTs in agricultural development and food security. In 2008, it expanded to 4,200 community members (encompassing policymakers, planners, development practitioners, farmer organizations, researchers and information and communication specialists involved in agriculture and rural development) from more than 150 countries. The community activities comprise three components: a Web-based multilingual collaboration space on a neutral domain (www.e-agriculture.org), face-to-face events, and in-country interventions.

97. The year 2008 was particularly successful for www.e-agriculture.org, the Web-based collaboration component of the community's activities. The platform, which largely relies on volunteering efforts to lead discussions and assist in providing content, contributed towards the development of policies and best practices through organizing online forum debates and capacity-building courses. However, the initiative is faced with the challenge of sustaining itself on limited contributions of human resources by FAO and partner organizations. There are no funds solely dedicated to e-agriculture activities available to support its expansion. Its continued success will depend on the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and in-kind contributions from institutions in the development community and the private sector, along with envisaged structural changes such as the establishment of a formal secretariat in order to support country interventions.

98. At the May 2008 WSIS follow-up Cluster of events held in Geneva, FAO held a special interactive session on What Role Could the \$100 (XO) Laptop Play Outside the Educational Sphere for which It Was Originally Intended – Specifically Related to Agriculture and Rural Development? Thus, the discussion focused on the adaptation the OLPC initiative into a One Laptop Per Farmer (OLPF) variant.

99. E-agriculture stakeholders contributed with expertise and discussions at various other international and regional forums. At the e-Agriculture India Conference in July 2008, the global e-agriculture initiative discussed the role of PPPs and communities of practice in supporting and developing e-agriculture. FAO facilitated the e-agriculture panel at the World Congress of the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD), Asian Federation of Information Technology in Agriculture (AFITA) and World Congress on Computers in Agriculture.

100. In November 2008, the Mobile Telephony in Rural Areas Online Forum examined key challenges that rural communities face in enhancing the benefits of mobile telephony. At the January 2009 Share Fair held in Rome, Italy, which focused on the knowledge-sharing aspects of agricultural development and food security initiatives, several sessions – e.g. “Rural telephony” and “Leveraging Connections Amongst Networks” – featured the e-agriculture agenda.⁴²

⁴² The Share Fair took place at FAO headquarters in Rome from 20 to 22 January 2009. The event was organized by Bioversity International, the CSIR ICT-KM programme, FAO, IFAD and WFP,

(viii) *Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content (C8)*

101. During 2008, UNESCO activities were developed in the framework of the International Year of Languages 2008. This involved a series of conferences concerning standard-setting instruments promoting multilingualism, linguistic and cultural diversity in cyberspace and linguistic diversity, globalization and development.

102. In June 2008, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved the introduction of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) in Internet addresses, which will enable millions of users to access the Internet using their own, non-Latin scripts. UNESCO established a close cooperation with ICANN and participated in the policy design through its Governmental Advisory Committee to ensure that all linguistic and cultural communities were represented in the global information networks, provide linguistic expertise, raise awareness among its member States about the implementation of IDNs and build capacities in developing countries.

103. UNESCO's Open Training Platform project is an online collaborative hub to free learning resources in all development domains, especially language, to better serve local people's knowledge and skills acquisition needs worldwide. It is enriched by over 1,600 members from all United Nations agencies and over 630 other institutions dedicated to development, including languages issues. The UNESCO study, *Measuring Linguistic Diversity on the Internet*, was updated in 2008 under the title "Twelve years of experiences in measuring linguistic diversity on the Internet: balance and perspectives".

104. ITU launched a special initiative on Assistance to Indigenous People to create dedicated actions and projects with respect to equitable access, use and knowledge of ICTs, based on preservation of their heritage and cultural legacy. Planned activities include (a) identification and support of self-sustaining projects for indigenous communities in the Americas region; (b) provision of ICT equipment for telecentres, giving indigenous people access to ICTs with the aim of increasing their knowledge and use of ICTs to help them become members of the global information society; (c) promotion of ICT education through online training, encouragement of research on information, and adapting innovative forms of networking; (d) a study on ICT access, use and knowledge for indigenous communities in Africa and Arab regions and identification of particular needs for development of their respective ICT portals; and (e) a workshop on ICTs for indigenous communities in Africa for development of guidelines for their ICT portals.

(ix) *Media (C9)*

105. In the light of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO conducted a series of World Press Freedom Day celebrations at the national level in more than 100 countries on 3 May 2008, and hosted an international High-Level Symposium on Freedom of Expression, focusing on the central role it plays in promoting dialogue, democracy and development in Paris in October 2008. Meanwhile, a series of celebrations were conducted at the national level. Related activities also included the launch of the second revised edition of the publication *Freedom of Information: A Comparative Legal Survey*, and the ongoing project to develop a Freedom of Expression Toolkit for secondary school students.

106. The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) continued to play its role as a resource mobilization mechanism for fostering media development. IPDC's success reflects UNESCO's global role and leadership in promoting the development of free, independent and pluralistic media. With a budget allocation of

www.sharefair.net

nearly \$2 million, 70 projects were launched in April 2008, with IPDC's support, in 50 developing countries. Ninety new project proposals were received from local media organizations for submission to the IPDC Bureau, to be held in February 2009.

107. The comprehensive set of Media Development Indicators (MDIs), which was endorsed by the IPDC Intergovernmental Council in March 2008, was published in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and other languages. It constitutes an important diagnostic tool for assessing the state of media within the national context and helping stakeholders determine the areas requiring development assistance. These indicators have now been recognized as a major standard-setting tool by stakeholders and United Nations agencies dealing with media development and good governance. In cooperation with other stakeholders, UNESCO is piloting the MDIs in several countries such as Mozambique, Croatia and Kyrgyzstan.

108. The strengthening of the United Nations inter-agency collaboration in communication for sustainable development was pursued further. The eleventh United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (C4D) dealt with monitoring, evaluation and institutionalization of C4D in the UN system (Washington D.C., March 2009).

109. The second phase of the Community Multimedia Centres (CMC) scale-up in Africa, led by UNESCO, has allowed the establishment of more than 60 CMCs in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. Furthermore, almost 30 new projects to develop community media and CMCs have been launched in developing countries.

110. UNESCO further developed its cooperation with the European Commission, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association on the development of media to ensure access to information and knowledge, and pioneered the development of a universal model of teacher training curriculum for media and information literacy. A comprehensive project to enhance professional standards and self-regulatory media accountability system was launched in August 2008 targeting countries in South-East Europe.

(x) *Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society (C10)*

111. After the three regional events organized with the support of UNESCO in Latin America, Africa and Europe, a fourth regional conference for the Asia-Pacific region on the ethical dimensions of the information society was held in Viet Nam in 2008. Seventy participants from Government, private sector, civil society and UNESCO discussed issues such as accessibility, confidentiality, privacy, diversity and respect of fundamental human values. The main goal of the First Conference on Info-ethics Action Plan initiative was the execution of the action plan resulting from the First Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference on Info-Ethics. The intellectual contributions and the results of the conference were published and made available online.⁴³ The project also facilitated the setting up of a "Universities Network on Info-Ethics" and of a "Latin-American Youth Network on Info-Ethics".

⁴³ See http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1534&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

(b) **Implementation of themes**

(i) *Financing mechanisms*

112. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2008/3, recommended that UNGIS organize focused, open-ended multi-stakeholder consultations on the implementation of paragraphs 3 to 28 of the Tunis Agenda, concerning financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of ICT for development. At the third meeting of the UNGIS, held in September 2008, a first round of discussion within UNGIS took place, and the Chair invited participants to send their views to the Secretariat.

113. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society stressed that financing of ICT for development needed to be placed in the context of the growing importance of the role of ICTs, not only as a medium of communication, but also as a development enabler, and as a tool for the achievement of the internationally-agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs.

114. ICT development generally entails substantial investment. Many countries, especially LDCs, are unable to meet such financial demands on their own, and have to draw on the private sector and external sources for investment. Most donor countries and multilateral agencies recognize the need for ICT development and have supported a variety of projects. Assistance for ICT for development activities is usually built around partnerships between multilateral and bilateral agencies, local ministries (such as communication, finance, education, health and local government), civil society groups and the private sector. International organizations and development agencies, as well as regional development banks, have provided resources to help countries develop e-strategies and policies.

115. Existing mechanisms for funding the information society continued to be utilized to fund the growth of new ICT infrastructure and services. Foreign direct investment (FDI), in particular, has allowed many countries to have access to technology, capital, management skills and export markets. Developing countries accounted for a significant share of “greenfield” FDI projects in ICT over the past several years.

116. At the Conference on Financing for Development in November 2008 in Doha, Qatar, GAID drew attention to the potential of new Web-based, distributed, and viral modes of mobilizing financing for development, by convening a High-Level Working Session on Innovative Financing for Digital Development. During the event, business leaders and innovators brainstormed on new ways to mobilize resources for realizing the ICT for the development agenda via Web 2.0 technologies and social networking platforms, drawing upon the outcomes and recommendations of GAID’s landmark conference, United Nations Meets Web 2.0 – New Media, New Entrepreneurs and New ICT Opportunities in Emerging Markets, held 25–26 March 2008 in New York, and of the Global Forum on Access and Connectivity: Innovative Funding for ICT and Development, held 19–20 May 2008 in Kuala Lumpur.

117. The Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), established in Geneva in 2005 as an innovative financial mechanism for ICT development of a voluntary nature open to interested stakeholders, has not been adequately supported and therefore was not able to provide large-scale financing for ICT projects.

(ii) *Internet Governance*

a. Enhanced cooperation

118. The Tunis Agenda outlined the need for enhanced cooperation for public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and for monitoring performance in this regard. The process

was begun in 2006 by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Internet Governance. In 2007, UN-DESA was entrusted by the Secretary-General to continue the consultation process and to participate in the facilitation of the reporting process on the enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. On 12 March 2008, the Office of the Under-Secretary General of UN-DESA requested and received annual performance reports from 10 organizations on the topic of enhanced cooperation. Several common elements appeared in the responses.

119. All organizations reported that they had made efforts in outreach to other stakeholders. The government-led organizations had undertaken activities to broaden cooperation with business, civil society and the Internet community. Meanwhile, the Internet community organizations reported on their outreach to Governments, business and civil society. Almost all organizations indicated that they had actively participated in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and most of them (including ICANN, ISOC, ITU, OECD and UNESCO) had representatives either in the IGF's Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group or in the IGF Chair's Advisory Group. Several organizations (including the COE, ISOC, ITU, OECD, UNESCO and W3C) participated in the creation of IGF Dynamic Coalitions. There were plans to continue to focus on IGF in its multi-stakeholder public policy discussions.

120. Many reports highlighted capacity-building events, such as educational programmes, conferences and workshops. Several organizations indicated a focus on facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue. Reference was sometimes made to the participation in forums developing Internet governance procedures and policies, with the COE outlining its responsibility for facilitating the negotiation of treaties on Internet policy. WIPO discussed its extensive contribution in mediating intellectual property disputes with regard to domain naming, and ITU referred to its work on uniting existing cybersecurity initiatives to provide an overarching framework for multi-stakeholder consensus.

121. While the efforts made in support of enhanced cooperation varied in nature between the different organizations, the performance reports suggest that the Tunis Agenda's call for enhanced cooperation had been taken seriously by respondents.

b. Internet Governance Forum

122. The IGF moved into the third year of its provisional five-year lifespan and held its annual meeting in Hyderabad, India, 3–6 December 2008. The overall theme was "Internet for All". More than 1,400 participants from 94 countries took part in the meeting. The IGF has matured in several respects. The third forum allowed for discussions of politically sensitive issues in a climate of good faith, and succeeded in reducing people's apprehensions and concerns. The main sessions were organized as thematic days under the following headings: "Reaching the Next Billion", "Promoting Cyber-Security and Trust" and "Managing Critical Internet Resources". The last day covered "Emerging Issues – the Internet of Tomorrow" and "Taking Stock and the Way Forward". In parallel, 87 self-organized workshops, best practice forums, dynamic coalition meetings and open forums were scheduled around the broad themes of the main sessions and the overall mandate of the IGF.

123. Some common threads emerged from the discussion. Multi-stakeholder cooperation was seen as a prerequisite to tackle all existing problems. All users were part of the Internet and all actors had a shared responsibility to find solutions. While it was recognized that there was a need to discuss Internet governance issues globally, it was felt that there was a need for acting locally. There was a general understanding that there were no "one-size-fits-all solution". All countries had to find their own solutions, corresponding to their own situation. Through the sharing of best practices and the exchange of information, they could find solutions that were adapted to their needs.

124. The 2008 meeting also addressed the review process, as called for by the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (para. 76). Formal consultations will be held at the fourth IGF meeting in 2009, to allow for a timely decision by the United Nations membership within the five-year deadline. The fourth annual meeting will be held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 15–18 November 2009.

125. In 2008, there was also a spread of national and regional IGF initiatives that fed into the annual IGF meeting. Two initiatives were reported from Africa: an East African IGF (EAIGF) was held in Nairobi, bringing together outcomes from national meetings held in Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Another meeting took place in Dakar, focusing on West African country issues for Internet governance. An IGF in the Latin America and Caribbean Region was held in Montevideo and a European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) was held in Strasbourg, hosted by the Council of Europe. National IGF meetings were held in the United Kingdom, In Italy and in Germany.

(iii) *Measuring ICT for development*

126. During 2008, the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development continued to assist developing countries in collecting ICT data based on internationally-agreed standards, compiling and disseminating indicators globally and regionally, revising and expanding the core list of indicators and examining new issues, such as measuring the economic and social impact of ICT.

127. In a resolution of July 2008 (2008/31), the Economic and Social Council acknowledged the work of the partnership to develop indicators and recommended that it consider the creation of benchmarks and impact indicators, for further consideration by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), in order to track progress towards the attainment of the specific goals and targets set out in the WSIS outcome documents. The UNSD has included the core indicators collected by different members of the partnership in its newly-established United Nations data portal. The core ICT in Education indicators were developed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) following a pilot data collection, regional workshops, and discussion with ministries of education. UIS is now concentrating on expanding these indicators for countries which have undertaken nationwide implementations of new technology in schools.

128. The partnership revised the core list of ICT indicators in consultation with national statistical offices. The revised list was presented to the fortieth session of the UNSC and covers (a) indicators on ICT infrastructure and access; (b) access to and use of ICT by households and individuals; (c) ICT use by businesses; (d) ICT use in education; (e) the ICT sector; and (f) trade in ICT goods.

129. Following repeated calls from policymakers for data on the social and economic impact of ICT, the partnership decided to establish a new Task Group on Impacts. It will examine how impacts can be measured and what the data requirements are. The goal is to provide countries with a set of statistical and analytical tools to carry out their own impact assessments.

130. The individual members of the partnership have continued to carry out technical assistance and capacity-building for developing economies. This includes the development and delivery of training courses by UNCTAD and ITU, country-level advisory missions, regional and national workshops organized by different members and the preparation of practical guidebooks, such as the OECD guide to the information society, the UNCTAD *Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Information Economy* and the ITU *Manual for Measuring Access to, and Use of, Information and Communication Technologies by Households and Individuals*. In May, the partnership released a comprehensive statistical report, *The Global Information Society: a Statistical View*, which presented the ICT

indicators available globally and an assessment of progress in measuring the information society and data gaps that remain.

131. The WSIS Stocktaking Database, which is maintained under the stewardship of ITU, has become a useful tool for the exchange of information on the implementation projects in relation to the action lines. By May 2008, more than 3,800 projects had been registered in the database. The *Report on the WSIS Stocktaking 2008*, which was also published in May, updates stakeholders on activities undertaken by Governments and other organizations with regard to the achievement of WSIS objectives and targets from the end of 2005 to mid-2008.

132. Future work of the partnership will focus on: (a) continuing to revise the core list of indicators, including developing indicators on measuring e-government; (b) expanding the work on measuring ICT impact; (c) continuing to assist developing countries on their work on ICT statistics, through regional and national seminars and training workshops, as well as technical advice to countries (The manuals developed by UNCTAD and ITU on measuring business and household ICT statistics and their related training courses, will be useful tools in this effort.); and (d) continuing to raise political awareness of the importance of ICT measurement by improving communication tools and participating actively in international efforts to measure progress in the achievement of the WSIS targets and the MDGs.

III. Findings and recommendations

133. Considerable progress was made in 2008 towards the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS. Numerous activities have been reported by the different entities of the United Nations system. However, as there is no reporting mechanism in place with regards to activities undertaken by other stakeholders, it remains difficult for the action line facilitators and the regional commissions to assess the efforts made by civil society, business entities and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and to report on them to the CSTD secretariat. Also, the number of stakeholders, the number of recommendations and commitments, as well as the absence of benchmarks and targets in the Geneva Plan of Action, complicates the assessment of WSIS implementation.

134. With regards to action line facilitation, while some entities have reported on successful mobilization of relevant stakeholders through electronic networks and face-to-face consultations and meetings, others have continued to encounter considerable difficulty in involving participation of all stakeholders and reported on low participation of new stakeholders in the facilitation process. One obstacle identified was the high cost associated with face-to-face facilitation meetings in Geneva, which deters participation from developing-country stakeholders.

135. There is a need for greater coordination among the leading facilitator agencies and the CSTD secretariat, with a view to streamlining and clustering the WSIS-related events, including the action line facilitation meetings into one week event to take place back-to-back with the annual regular session of the CSTD. At an open consultation meeting organized by ITU and UNESCO, on 15 September 2008, some participants suggested, inter alia, that the cluster of WSIS-related events should be organized with opening and closing plenary meetings and parallel sessions on action lines in between, and that the events could be organized along themes, including ICTs for the MDGs, financial mechanisms, security and open access to scientific literature. The organizers of the WSIS-related events for 2009 are taking several of these suggestions into account.

136. There is also a need to benchmark progress towards the attainment of the specific targets and goals set out in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. In this regard, the commission, through the CSTD secretariat, may

consider collaborating closely with UNGIS, the lead moderators and facilitators to group the 11 action lines into thematic clusters.

137. New topics that were not centre stage at the first and second phases of WSIS in 2003 and 2005 continue to emerge, such as online privacy and child protection on the Internet. It is recommended that the commission in its future work focus not only on the positive sides of the emerging information society, but also on various risks, including phishing and other types of cyber-criminality.

138. The CSTD may consider focusing on pro-poor ICT policies and applications, including the need for access to broadband at the grass roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divide between and within countries.

139. More emphasis is required by all stakeholders on the empowerment aspects of new ICTs. Empowerment, strengthening of democratic processes and ICTs in education should be priority themes for the CSTD. More attention should also be given by all stakeholders to the potential contributions of ICTs towards the MDGs and the reduction of poverty.

140. While the supply of ICT infrastructure remains a priority for many developing countries, it is important to recognize that rising Internet penetration alone does not necessarily allow for an information society for all. Meaningful access, at the individual or community level, requires more than infrastructure. The human capacities – with an estimated 776 million illiterate adults and 75 million out-of-school children – and the lack of local content remain serious bottlenecks in this context. People need the funds to afford access, and the skills required to make use of the services and equipment. The commission should therefore seek to foster broader understanding of access and stress the demand side factors, with a focus on enabling communities and empowering citizens.
