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**Note by the secretariat on activities undertaken by
relevant United Nations entities in the
implementation of WSIS**

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1. Introduction

The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society recommends that the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) should be organized taking into account the themes and Action Lines in the Geneva Plan of Action, and moderated or facilitated by United Nations agencies when appropriate.

On the follow-up level, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was mandated to oversee the United Nations system-wide follow-up of the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phase of the Summit. During its substantive session in July 2006, ECOSOC decided that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) shall effectively assist the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS, and to that end shall review and assess progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of Action Lines, recommendations and commitments contained in the outcome documents of WSIS.

This report describes relevant activities at the international and regional levels in the implementation of WSIS Action Lines. It is based on inputs from entities in the United Nations system that are Action Line moderators and facilitators.

2. Action Line moderators/facilitators

An Annex to the Tunis Agenda provides an indicative and non-exhaustive list of facilitators/moderators for the Action Lines of the Geneva Plan of Action. On 24 February 2006, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a consultation meeting of WSIS Action Line moderators/facilitators, in order to strengthen synergies across the Action Lines, address cross-cutting and work towards the finalization of the list of moderators/facilitators for the different WSIS Action Lines.

Table 1: List of moderators/facilitators for the different WSIS Action Lines

Action Line	Moderators/ Facilitators for Implementation¹
1. The role of Governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development	ECOSOC/United Nations Regional Commissions/ITU/[<u>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)</u>]
2. Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive Information Society	ITU/UNESCO/[Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (<u>FAO</u>)/United Nations Industrial Development Organization (<u>UNIDO</u>)]
3. Access to information and knowledge	ITU/UNESCO/[<u>FAO/UNIDO</u>]
4. Capacity-building	UNDP/UNESCO/ITU/UNCTAD/[<u>DESA/FAO/UNIDO</u>]
5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	ITU
6. Enabling environment	ITU/UNDP/United Nations Regional Commissions/UNCTAD/[<u>DESA/UNIDO</u>]
7. ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life	
•E-government	[<u>DESA</u>]/UNDP/ITU
•E-business	UNDP/ITU
•E-learning	UNESCO/ITU/UNIDO
•E-health	World Health Organization (WHO)/ITU
•E-employment	International Labour Organization (ILO)/ITU
•E-environment	WHO/World Meteorological Organization (WMO)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat)/ITU/International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
•E-agriculture	FAO/ITU
•E-science	UNESCO/ITU/UNCTAD/[<u>WHO</u>]
8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content	UNESCO
9. Media	UNESCO
10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society	UNESCO/ECOSOC/[<u>WHO</u>]
11. International and regional cooperation	United Nations Regional Commissions/UNDP/ITU/UNESCO/ECOSOC/[<u>DESA</u>]

¹ Table 1 describes the original list with the additions proposed at the meeting of Action Line moderators/facilitators on 24 February [underlined and in square brackets].

3. Progress made in the implementation of WSIS Action Lines

3.1 Action Line C1: the role of Governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

As part of the World Information Society Week (9–19 May 2006, Geneva), on 15 and 16 May DESA facilitated the consultation meeting on modalities for the implementation of Action Line C1. This meeting was open to all stakeholders and was attended by 43 participants, including 15 representatives from member States, 19 from United Nations agencies and regional and international organizations, seven from civil society and academia, and two from the private sector.

Further to the request of the C1 Group, in June and July 2006, DESA conducted an online consultation to further discuss the work, themes and modalities of the Action Line's implementation process. Building on the findings and recommendations of the Geneva Consultations on Action Line C1 (May 2006), based upon the results of the online consultation (June–July 2006), and in respect of the guidelines set by ITU, DESA identified the following sub-categories for Action Line C1: (a) ICT for sustainable development; (b) national e-strategies; (c) ICT in parliaments; (d) e-participation; and (e) partnerships.

A website dedicated to the facilitation of the implementation of Action Line C1 was established within the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) portal at <http://www.unpan.org/post-WSIS-C1-C7home.asp>. The website contains relevant resources and is updated on a regular basis.

Action Line C1 Sub-group on ICT in Parliaments

Following the first consultation meeting and the subsequent establishment of the Sub-group on ICT and Parliaments, the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, a global initiative launched by DESA at WSIS with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), has started to map partners, initiatives, documentation and collaborative efforts in two specific areas of work: (a) parliaments' role in the promotion of the Information Society; and (b) applications of ICT tools for the modernization of parliamentary processes (e-parliament), including inter-parliamentary cooperation.

A comprehensive portal was established in October 2006 (www.ictparliament.org) and has continuously enriched its content with the help of parliamentary institutions and partners. The portal now features ICT-related legislation, studies, analyses, best practices, videos and links to major activities around the world in these areas, organized around regional nodes.

DESA has also consulted with a large number of actors to place the various activities undertaken in this area in different legislatures within a broader framework which can help connect in a more comprehensive way the efforts of the international community to leverage the forces of the Information Society in support of democracy and development. Among these, in addition to United Nations system entities and universities, IPU, a number of national and regional parliaments, the Inter-American

Development Bank (IADB), the International Parliamentarians Association for Information Technology (IPAIT), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, (IFLA), the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Africa i-Parliament Action Plan initiative are currently discussing with DESA concrete modalities of partnerships.

In recent months, two specific activities have helped raise awareness of the role that parliaments can play in promoting the Information Society. They include the “IPAIT V” conference held in Finland in January 2007, and “The Policymaking role of Parliaments in the Development of the Information Society” conference held in Italy in March 2007. Both allowed for frank discussions among members of parliaments and stakeholders, and resulted in final declarations.

With regard to the application of new technologies in parliamentary processes, two major mechanisms of coordination must be highlighted. The first is the work carried out through the Africa i-Parliament Action Plan (www.parliaments.info), which promotes, among other things, the international conference “African Legal Resources: Challenges and Opportunities of Legislative Informatics”, hosted by the National Assembly of Nigeria in Abuja in March 2007. The second is the launch of the Global Network of IT experts in Parliament (GNIT), a virtual hub hosted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament for sharing concrete experiences and practices among peers. The purpose of GNIT is to coordinate implementation among stakeholders of new activities, such as the World e-Parliament Conference at the end of 2007.

Much remains to be done, particularly with regard to avoiding duplication of activities and exploiting the knowledge available within parliaments to support development initiatives. However, the start of this collaborative effort promises a very positive outcome in the long run.

Action Line C1 Sub-Group on e-Participation

The Expert Group Meeting on E-participation and E-government: Understanding the Present and Creating the Future was held in Budapest, Hungary, in July 2006. The goal of the meeting was to further the thinking of the United Nations on e-participation and e-government by exploring and identifying issues and challenges facing both Governments and citizens in their quest towards development, inclusion and empowerment. The event brought together experts from the private sector, Governments and academia to review approaches and best practices in understanding what constitutes e-government and how to characterize e-participation in countries worldwide.

A Panel on E-government for Participation and Inclusion — a Special Event of the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in November 2006. The goal of the meeting was to further the thinking of the United Nations on e-participation and e-inclusion by exploring and identifying issues and challenges facing both Governments and citizens in their quest to devise ICT-led participatory and inclusive policies and programmes. Over 100 participants took part in the Panel, including delegates from United Nations

member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector representatives worldwide.

3.2 Action Line C2: information and communication infrastructure

As the provisional facilitator, ITU held a consultation meeting on Action Line C2 on 9 March 2006 in Doha in conjunction with the World Telecommunication Development Conference. The meeting gave direction as regards the main activities to be considered during the facilitation process, including implementation of initiatives and information sharing on ICT deployment initiatives.

A second consultation meeting took place on 18 May 2006 which confirmed ITU as facilitator of the Action Line and welcomed the Association of Progressive Communication as co-facilitator. Participants addressed priority themes relevant to the Actions Line, but decided to focus on supporting the implementation of concrete and impact-making initiatives. For this purpose, a platform has been created on the Action Line website (www.itu.int/wsis/c2/index.html) to facilitate cooperation on large projects.

In relation to the implementation of Action Line C2, ITU continued to be at the forefront of providing global standards for telecommunication, in particular for Next Generation Networks under the Global Standard Initiative (GSI).

ITU has also been actively pursuing studies on digital television, including the complex issue of the transition from the widely spread analogue system to digital broadcasting. As a result, a package of International Recommendations and standards has been developed for terrestrial and satellite digital broadcasting systems and interactive systems. The digital broadcasting networks, in addition to their main purpose (distribution of video and audio signals), may serve as a data platform for innovative telecommunication applications (e.g. e-health, e-government, e-learning) to help effectively bridge the digital divide. Furthermore, the Regional Radio Communication Conference adopted a Treaty for Europe and Africa, establishing an institutional framework for harmonized introduction of digital broadcasting.

3.3 Action Line C3: access to information and knowledge

A consultation meeting on Action Line C3 took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 16 to 19 October 2006. The constructive discussions resulted in the designation of UNESCO as the official facilitator for the Action Line, and the preliminary sub-groupings of the Action Line were agreed as follows: public domain information, access to public official information, community access, libraries and archives, diversity of software models, research and development for accessibility for all, open access to scientific information, and e-government for local authorities.

As facilitator of the WSIS Action Line C3, UNESCO organized, in collaboration with ITU, a Global Symposium on Promoting the Multilingual Internet from 9 to 11 May 2006. This Symposium complemented the work done previously on Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and identified further steps for equipping non-scripted languages to be present in cyberspace.

Also, during the first Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Athens (29 October–2 November 2006), UNESCO, together with the Internet Governance Project (IGP),

organized a workshop on “Content Filtering and Freedom of Expression”, which focused on areas such as characteristics of blocking and filtering in cyberspace, justifications and criticisms of this blocking and filtering, and jurisdictional problems and their potential solutions. The discussion also focused on the current situation, in which restrictions of freedom of expression are no longer only typical for non-democratic countries, but have also become more widespread in democratic countries. An intense debate on possible steps towards a more effective protection of freedom of expression focused primarily on the problem of the industry’s collaboration with blocking or filtering Governments. Regardless of differing conclusions, there was broad consensus among the participants that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) still provides the best conceivable framework to enable and protect freedom of expression. Participants emphasized that the UDHR is very precise about acceptable restrictions and that it constitutes a framework for all actors, citizens, Governments and corporations. However, the enforcement of the UDHR principles on the Internet poses a growing challenge.

3.4 Action Line C4: capacity-building

In line with paragraph 108 and the Annex of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, UNDP, in its capacity as provisional moderator/facilitator, organized the first facilitation meeting on Action Line C4 on 11 May 2006. This meeting was open to all WSIS stakeholders (Governments and international organizations, as well as civil society and business entities active in the WSIS process).

Under the Internet Training Centres Initiative (ITCI), by the end of 2006, ITU had established 66 centres in partnership with Cisco Systems Inc., and 12 centres with the European Commission. The Centres provide training programmes using face-to-face workshops and e-learning systems.

UNCTAD has developed a training course on the legal aspects of e-commerce, delivered through face-to-face training or through distance learning. The course was delivered through distance learning to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Mauritius.

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute (Vi) develops customized training materials for use as stand-alone distance learning packages or as selected modules in pre-existing courses. Together with other support services, these educational resources contribute to the building of individual and institutional capacities in developing countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs). The Vi promotes international and regional cooperation in the field of capacity-building, through its network of national partners in developed, developing and least developed countries, and through its collaboration with other international agencies, including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank.

3.5 Action Line C5: building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

As a focal point for facilitating Action Line C5, ITU organized the first facilitation meeting at ITU headquarters on 15 and 16 May 2006, in conjunction with World Telecommunication Day, which had the theme “Promoting Global Cybersecurity”.

ITU also unveiled at that time the Cybersecurity Gateway, an information resource on cybersecurity-related initiatives worldwide.

Based on this first meeting, work programmes in three focus areas have been initiated, including (a) development of a generic model framework or toolkit that national policymakers could use to develop and implement a national cybersecurity or Critical Information Infrastructure Protection (CIIP) programme; (b) capacity-building on the harmonization of cybercrime legislation, the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime, and enforcement; and (c) sharing information of best practices on developing watch, warning and incident response. The second consultation meeting is scheduled for 15 and 16 May 2007. Updated information is available on the "Partnerships for Global Cybersecurity" website:

www.itu.int/osg/spu/cybersecurity/pgc/index.phtml.

In the ITU's Development Sector, a series of C5-related initiatives have been undertaken in the past or are part of the sector's 2007 Operational Plan, including publications, the development of a new "Project for Enhancing Cooperation on Cybersecurity and Combating Spam", and Study Group Question 22/1 on securing information and communication networks: best practices for developing a culture of cybersecurity.

In the ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Sector, Study Group 17 is the Lead Study Group for telecommunication security activities relating to Action Line C5. Activities are focused on defining and maintaining overall security frameworks and project management activities involving the coordination, assignment and prioritization of efforts leading to timely communication system security recommendations (standards).

3.6 Action Line C6: enabling environment

ITU continued to provide assistance and tools to member States in regulatory and policy environments. Two main publications have been released in 2006: the seventh edition of Trends in Telecommunication Reform 2006: Regulating in the Broadband World; and the infoDev/ITU ICT Regulation Toolkit, a Web-based tool organized as a series of lined modules to provide regulators, telecom service providers, policymakers, sector experts and the general public with the latest on regulatory topics, best practices and case studies.

In 2007, the seventh annual Global Symposium for Regulators will examine the theme "The Road to Next Generation Networks (NGN): Can Regulators Promote Investment and Achieve Open Access?"

ITU also continues to carry out studies and to approve recommendations on questions related to the broadband aspects of spectrum management, including long-term strategies for spectrum utilization and issues related to introduction of ultra-wideband devices.

3.7 Action Line C7: ICT applications

3.7.1 E-government

As part of the World Information Society Week (9–19 May 2006, Geneva), on 15 and 16 May DESA facilitated the consultation meeting on modalities for the implementation of Action Line C7 E-government. This meeting was open to all stakeholders.

Further to the request of the C7 E-government Group, in June and July 2006, DESA conducted an online consultation to further discuss the work, themes and modalities of the Action Lines' implementation process. Building on the finding and recommendations of the Geneva Consultations on Action Line C7 E-government, (May 2006), based upon the results of the online consultation (June–July 2006), and in respect of the guidelines set by ITU, DESA identified the following sub-categories for Action Line C7 E-government: (a) e-government strategies; (b) e-government systems; (c) measuring e-government; and (d) knowledge management.

A website dedicated to the facilitation of the implementation of Action Line C7 E-government was established within the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) portal at <http://www.unpan.org/post-WSIS-C1-C7home.asp>. The website contains relevant resources and is updated on a regular basis.

Action Line C7 E-government: Sub-Group on E-Government Systems

Compendium on Innovative E-government Practices

In light of the importance of e-government as a tool to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, through UNPAN, has created a compendium of innovative practices in the area of e-government. The Compendium provides an opportunity for Governments to share with the world their activities in e-government by highlighting their valuable experiences. The second edition of the Compendium of Innovative E-government Practices was published in September 2006. It includes 200 cases from 57 different countries, and can be accessed at:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN023997.pdf>.

Seminar for Diplomats on “E-governance for Development”

In June 2006 in New York, DESA designed and conducted a Seminar for Diplomats on “E-governance for Development”. The Seminar specifically addressed the topics of e-government and knowledge management as tools for enhancing the capacity of Governments to impact development efforts. Particular attention was paid to developing country contexts. While this seminar was open to all delegates, it was designed for members of the permanent missions who participate in the work of the Second Committee and who address matters relating to ICTs for Development. Over 20 delegates participated in the event.

Online Training

Online training is a core activity of DESA, aimed at building capacity of civil servants on e-governance-related issues. During the reporting period, the UNPAN Training Centre offered an Online Training Course on E-government: What a Government Leader Should Know, which counted over 300 registered participants. In addition,

UNPAN Training Workshops on the Concept and Application of E-information Management and UNPAN Training on Building Knowledge-Based Organizations, consisting of a combination of on-site and online training sessions, were offered to network participants.

Advisory services to United Nations Member States

With the goal of building the capacity of United Nations Member States in the area of e-governance, DESA provides advisory services to requesting Governments. DESA is currently partnering with five countries in the Caribbean region and Africa — Belize, Jamaica, Morocco, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines — to implement operational e-government projects at the national level in specific e-accounting priority areas as identified by these countries. In the Caribbean region, DESA established the Caribbean Technical and Advisory Support Facility (TASF) on e-government, which provides advisory support to Caribbean countries in the area of legal and regulatory reform, and capacity-building for civil servants. A Caribbean E-Government Knowledge Bank hosted by UNPAN was also established. In Lesotho, DESA is working with the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology to support the adoption of the same ICT platform across departments, with the aim of enhancing the Ministry's service delivery.

Action Line C7 E-government: Sub-Group on Measuring e-Government

United Nations e-Government Readiness Database

An interactive United Nations Knowledge Base (UNKB) of global e-government information and data was created to provide Governments and all members of civil society easy access to valuable information for research, education and planning purposes. This Knowledge Base can be accessed online at <http://www.unpan.org/egovkb/>, a website which allows users to view, sort and print information from the United Nations E-Readiness Data Center, or download copies of the annual (2003, 2004, 2005) United Nations Global E-Readiness Report and Survey, the primary source of data for the Knowledge Base.

Global E-Government Readiness Report and Survey 2005

The Global E-Government Readiness Report and Survey was published in concomitance with the Tunis phase of the WSIS in November 2005. It presents a systemic assessment of how Governments use ICTs to provide access and inclusion for all. Each Survey offers insights into the different strategies and common themes in e-government development among and across regions. By studying broad patterns of e-government use, it identifies countries which have taken a leadership role in promoting e-government readiness, and those where the development potential of ICT has not yet been exploited. The report is available both in hard copy and online at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN021888.pdf>

3.7.2 E-business

The first facilitation meeting on Action Lines C7 E-business and C7 E-employment was organized by UNCTAD, ILO and the International Trade Centre (ITC) on 24 May 2007 in Geneva. This meeting was open to all WSIS stakeholders.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the multi-stakeholder follow-up and implementation of the WSIS outcomes with respect to e-business and e-employment. In this context, UNCTAD, ILO and ITC, as respective interim focal points, shared their common view on contributing as moderators/facilitators to the implementation process, recognizing the key role of stakeholders from Government, civil society, academia and the private sector in shaping, promoting and implementing the process and related projects and programmes.

In 2006, UNCTAD published the “Information Economy Report”, which addressed many ICT-related themes: e-business, namely ICTs’ impact on enterprises in developing countries; the ICT industry sector; ICTs and international trade in services; approaches to measuring the impact of ICTs on productivity and growth, enterprises and jobs; Service Oriented Architecture and Web Services Technologies, including their significance for the evolution of e-business technologies; the legal nature of communications and data messages in electronic commerce; and the experience of developing countries in amending their domestic legal frameworks to reflect the needs of an electronic commerce environment.

UNCTAD supports the efforts of developing countries in developing e-business, in particular among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in sectors of economic importance and with export capacity, through a mix of sector-specific policies, training programmes and deployment of ICT tools, taking into account the local and national specificities.

Through its Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA, www.asycuda.org), UNCTAD proposes ICT solutions to improve customs performance. ASYCUDA uses ICT developed by UNCTAD to increase fiscal revenue, improve efficiency for traders and fight corruption in close to 100 developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The UNCTAD e-Tourism Initiative aims to foster the inclusion of SMEs of developing countries on international markets by providing technical and policy advice, and by providing innovative ICT solutions to various stakeholders of the tourism sector, thereby contributing to the transition of the national business landscape to a new economic, networking and e-business environment.

3.7.3 E-learning

The consultation meeting on Action Line C7 E-learning took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 16 to 19 October 2006. The constructive discussions resulted in the designation of UNESCO as the official facilitator for the Action Line and agreement on the preliminary sub-grouping the Action Line as follows: enhancing capacities for e-learning in education; communication and learning tools; e-learning policies and strategies; digital content within learning and education; legal and institutional frameworks; multi-stakeholder partnerships; and research and development in e-learning.

3.7.4 E-health

The WSIS, held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, outlined priority areas for action in ICT for health. Priorities included improving health information systems, facilitating access to knowledge and information in health, promoting the adoption of

international standards for exchange of health data, and strengthening systems for disaster response and communicable diseases monitoring and alert.

Progress on the international level has been made in each area through the work of WHO, its member States and partners.¹ In addition, the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly in May 2005 adopted Resolution WHA58.28 establishing an e-health strategy for WHO. In alignment with the WSIS agreements, the resolution urges member States to consider drawing up long-term strategic plans for the development and implementation of e-health services. It calls on Governments to form national e-health bodies to guide policy and strategy development in e-health, including data security, privacy, interoperability, cultural and linguistic issues, infrastructure, funding, monitoring and evaluation. WHO recommends that each member State establish a national-level body for e-health, formally supported by the ministry of health as a key instrument in implementing the resolution.²

Progress on the national level has been encouraging. Worldwide, countries are steadily integrating ICT into health systems and services. The findings of the first global survey for e-health, conducted by WHO's Global Observatory for eHealth and published in January 2007,³ serve as a baseline for WSIS actions related to health, showing progress in many assessed areas, and the majority of countries have ambitious plans. Developing countries in particular require guidance and support from WHO and its partners if they are not to be left behind in the rapidly evolving Information Society. The results are summarized in this survey.

Foundations for e-health. Overall, solid advances in building the foundation policies and strategies for e-health were reported, along with positive projections for 2008. One area requiring particular attention is *e-health governance*. Almost half of the responding countries have no governance mechanisms in place for e-health. Establishing such mechanisms will ensure that national e-health planning and implementation can be more effectively and transparently managed, based on intersectoral collaboration and full stakeholder participation.

The development of *e-health policies* will be the focus of attention of many Governments in the coming years, particularly those of developing countries. Best practices as well as lessons learned must be documented and published to help streamline the process in countries and to ensure good results. Public-private partnerships are increasingly being utilized to build infrastructure and to advance specific e-health programmes. This approach is gaining acceptance as a way to attract funding or in-kind support for e-health development. It is a positive sign that funding e-health initiatives was reported as being a major challenge for many member States.

The level of *infrastructure development* varies substantially across countries and the need for its systematic and coordinated implementation has become clear. There is growing use of "technology roadmaps" or blueprints to assist with the planning process. These are national plans for the development of ICT in health, which are central to facilitating the systematic design and implementation of national

¹ For detailed information on each area, see www.who.int.

² For WHA Resolution 58.28, see www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA58/WHA58_28-en.pdf.

³ For full survey results, see www.who.int/goe.

infrastructure. Joint planning with other sectors will be needed to ensure sound investment and best use of limited resources.

The layer of *enabling policies and strategies*, which can help citizens benefit from e-health, has not been well developed and requires increased attention. Working closely with member States, WHO and its partners will need to increase their efforts to address these issues. Although growth is anticipated, only one in two countries has adopted policies for citizen protection and equity of access. Concerted action by Governments, with the support of WHO, will give citizens the assurance they need that their personal electronic health data is secure from potential misuse and extend access to e-health services to all societal groups.

Notably, the creation of *multilingual e-health content* for the general public represented the lowest level of activity of any area studied, and growth projections are limited. Strategies need to be developed to facilitate the sharing of common language e-health content among countries, which can then be localized if necessary. Interoperability and the issues around the development and adoption of e-health standards also appear to be low on the agenda of many Governments. However, a marked increase in activity is expected as member States recognize the critical importance of adopting these measures to ensure that e-health systems can communicate effectively with each other. This is recognized as one of the greatest technical challenges facing the future of e-health.

ICT capacity-building of health professionals and students was an area where good progress was reported, and member States are keen to build on these initiatives. WHO is drafting a framework for action which will build on the existing country successes.

Rates of adoption of *e-health applications* are also increasing. Many countries have begun providing health information to the general public through websites, and projections for 2008 anticipate this will rise to nine out of 10 countries.

Knowledge services for health professionals and students are also experiencing strong growth. International electronic journal services are already accessible in most countries and the growth in access in developing countries is significant. As a complementary and often free source of research information, national open archives for health sciences show considerable potential and are predicted to grow worldwide. *E-learning* offers a viable approach to the education and training needs of health professionals and students, and will become a powerful tool, especially in developing countries. It is already being integrated into learning processes and promises to evolve in the coming few years. Finally, the growing commitment to the introduction of e-health systems and services by member States is clearly reflected by an increasing demand for e-health tools.

Much has already been achieved by countries in their actions to introduce ICT into their health systems and every indication points to the fact that they are eager to proceed along this path. The experiences of the more advanced countries can provide useful insights into best practices, as well as the likely challenges that countries with less experience will face. Those challenges are numerous. Member States are not just grappling with funding issues and growing infrastructural requirements, or striving towards interoperability of systems; they are also often struggling with the need to

change entrenched attitudes regarding technology, often in the health work force itself. Proceeding in a way that not only strengthens capacity, but also preserves cultural integrity and increases the access to such technologies for those who need it most, must remain a goal. There is no doubt that global health will be determined by advances in science and technology and that e-health will be central to this process.

In particular, countries need to develop sound policies and governance mechanisms to manage emerging e-health systems while preserving the notion of equity. They are likely to achieve the best results if they learn from other country or regional successes as well as failures. Collaboration is key in this process: the guiding principle for WHO in advancing the e-health agenda worldwide is fostering collaboration with international and national bodies, civil society, the private sector and other key stakeholders.

3.7.5 E-employment

Jointly with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNCTAD, ILO organized an Expert Meeting in Support of the Implementation and Follow-up of WSIS: ICT as an Enabler for Growth and Development, 4 and 5 December 2006. The first Facilitation Meeting on “E-business and E-employment” was jointly organized by UNCTAD and ILO on 17 May 2006. At that meeting, it was agreed to develop an Internet-based community of practice on ICTs and entrepreneurship. As a follow-up, ILO, UNCTAD, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Fordham University agreed to set up an Internet-based forum to develop a knowledge base on practices and policies to promote economic growth enhancing enterprise ICTs strategies. ILO is hosting this exercise.

In cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), ILO’s Inter-American Research and Documentation Centre on Vocational Training organized a meeting on ICT training with training institutions in Montevideo, Uruguay. A publication entitled “Learning and teaching in the Internet age: distance learning and new technologies for vocational training” was issued at this training session.

A tripartite (labour, employers and Governments) meeting on the social and labour implications of the increased use of advanced retail technologies concluded that the development of advanced technologies should not result in the widening of economic and digital divides; efforts should be made to support the transfer of technologies to developing countries. A second tripartite Meeting on the Production of Electronic Components for the IT Industries: Changing Labour Force Requirements in a Global Economy will be held in Geneva from 16 to 18 April 2007. The meeting will discuss a background report looking at the shift in production of ICT components between industrialized, developing and emerging economies; changing skill requirements; gender; age distribution; conditions of work; labour–management relations; and production in industrial zones. During the high-level segment of the 2006 ECOSOC meeting which dealt with “Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development”, ILO hosted a Ministerial Breakfast on Employment Creation and Poverty Reduction: The Role of ICTs.

The changes in labour demand resulting from ICTs are radically modifying the structure of occupations. For this reason, ILO is undertaking an update of the International Standard Classification of Occupations, which will allow a better understanding of the impacts of ICTs on the economy.

3.7.6 E-environment

WMO has been working as a global coordinator of data gathering and observations of earth, atmosphere and ocean. One of the existing WMO core programmes is the World Weather Watch (WWW), which combines observing systems, telecommunication facilities, and data-processing and forecasting centres, operated by member States. Building upon the WWW and other WMO programmes, WMO is in the process of establishing a global single data collection and distribution system, the WMO Information System (WIS).

The objective of the project is to develop a single coordinated infrastructure for the collection and sharing of weather, water and climate information, based on the use of standards (e.g. metadata) and cost-effective telecommunication services (e.g. managed data communication services, Internet and satellite systems).

WIS will enable further coordination between WMO member States and the outside community. WIS consists of the National Centres (NCs), Data Collection or Product Centres (DCPCs) and Global Information System Centres (GISCs). These functional bodies are added to the existing WWW Centres, and cover data collection, production, provision and exchange at national, regional and global levels. WIS is aimed at being part of a wider global project of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). At the third Earth Observation Summit in 2005, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) agreed to implement a 10-year plan for GEOSS designed to work upon the existing national, regional and international systems to provide relevant and accurate observations and information.

3.7.7 E-agriculture

On 12 June 2006, FAO hosted the first e-agriculture face-to-face workshop in Rome, bringing together representatives from some of the leading development organizations (the WSIS E-Agriculture Working Group (EAWG)). The goal was to facilitate efforts to develop an effective process to engage as wide a range of stakeholders as possible involved in agriculture that could benefit from ICT. Subsequent meetings were held, both physical and virtual, to finalize questions and communication strategies. It was agreed in the June 2006 meeting that the Communication and Promotion Officer of FAO (KCEF) would, in addition to serving as the WSIS E-Agriculture Communications Focal Point, also serve as Secretary to the EAWG. Responsibilities include facilitating communications and activities between WSIS, EAWG and stakeholders (including the E-Agriculture Knowledge Forum), as well as continuing the coordination, development, and general maintenance of the future e-agriculture Web-based platform and other communication-related activities.

In addition to the above, it was agreed by the EAWG that the following activities would also be undertaken:

- Formation of the EAWG by inclusion of other members, finalization of meeting

report, distribution to members and agreement of Terms of Reference (completed summer 2006);

- Initial engagement of stakeholders through an **open survey** of all stakeholders' views on e-agriculture in October 2006 (see Annex for survey results), also accessible from the main WSIS website. The questionnaire was in English, French and Spanish (completed and networked October and November 2006);
- EAWG members provide initial comments on the draft **e-agriculture paper**. An amended version will be produced, incorporating EAWG views as well as inputs from the open survey, and the revised document will be made widely available (continuing);
- A **virtual workspace (the E-Agriculture Knowledge Forum)** including various forums will be established for discussion of issues related to e-agriculture, with links to, but distinct from, the WSIS website. As part of the virtual workspace, stocktaking of interesting case studies and experiences related to areas of e-agriculture will be undertaken across a broad field of local, national and regional stakeholders (under development, test launch set for May 2007);
- An **e-agriculture website portal** will be established on a neutral domain to include the virtual workspaces and highlight, among other items, case studies, resources and best practices. It was noted that the part of the FAO website on "Bridging the Rural Digital Divide" (BRDD) (<http://www.fao.org/rdd>) could provide a model for the e-agriculture portal (under development, full launch expected in September 2007); and
- A **physical meeting** of stakeholders is planned for Rome in June 2007.

WSIS e-agriculture survey results

The survey, which ran officially from 1 October 2006 to 15 November 2006, was extensively networked through partners and a variety of communication networks, such as the Development Gateway, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the European Federation for Information Technology in Agriculture (EFITA), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Oneworld, just to name a few. The preliminary report in Annex I of the survey provides a partial summary review of survey results. Of 4,101 visitors to the survey, 3,197 completed all questions. In addition, 2,121 participants from 135 countries requested to join a virtual E-agriculture Knowledge Forum.

The survey was based on eight questions, and one optional question. Of these nine questions, four were open-ended. It is important to note that the complexity of analyzing the responses of the four open-ended questions is heightened by the trilingual survey results. Analysis of the survey results were to have been completed by February 2007.

As indicated above, at the end of the survey, participants were invited to sign up to join a virtual E-Agriculture Knowledge Forum; these participants will receive early invitations to join the online E-Agriculture Knowledge Forum Platform launching later this year.

3.7.8 E-science

UNESCO organized the first multi-stakeholder consultation on Action Line C7 E-science on 22 October 2006 in Beijing, China, in conjunction with the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) Annual Conference. The main objectives of the meeting were to (a) facilitate the initial contacts and sharing of information among multi-stakeholders on their priorities and expertise in the implementation of the Action Line; (b) consolidate a team of stakeholders for the Action Line; (c) designate facilitator(s)/moderator(s) for the multi-stakeholder team; and (d) agree on the working methods of the multi-stakeholder team, including its activities and expected outcome.

3.8 Action Line C8: cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content ICT applications

A consultation meeting on Action Line C8 took place on 12 May 2006 in Geneva, under the framework of the first “World Information Society Week”. It brought together about 50 representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), NGOs and the private sector. The participants designated UNESCO as the official facilitator for the Action Line and agreed on clustering the Action Line following so-called strategic themes, which were as follows: memory and heritage, local content and contemporary cultural expressions, linguistic diversity, traditional knowledge and all-inclusive Information Society (indigenous peoples, gender and disabled persons).

The symposium covered topics such as the inclusion of language on the Internet, standards and technical solutions, IDN operational experience showcase, scripting operational experiences, development and promotion of local content over the Internet and software for a multilingual Internet. In general, participants expressed the urgent need to promote and develop an enabling environment for the inclusion of languages and local digital content on the Internet.

In particular, ITU and UNESCO agreed to produce a publication on multilingualism in the digital world. Access to the Internet for persons with disabilities was identified as another area of cooperation with ITU. The results of the various discussions during the three-day meeting will be integrated into UNESCO’s ongoing work on the promotion of local content, software development and standard setting, especially with regard to the organization’s designation as the facilitator for the implementation of WSIS Action Line C8.

During the first IGF in Athens (29 October – 2 November 2006), UNESCO, in collaboration with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Egypt (NTRA), organized the workshop “Towards a multilingual global Internet: Avoiding the risk of fragmentation”, in four sessions. The first dealt with perspectives on the subject from five continents. Participants expressed a strong need to provide e-content in all languages, as some of the participants had already come up with practical suggestions, for example “Handle”, a system for describing digital objects and establishing transferable digital object architecture and the universal use of UNICODE standards. The second session, on multilingual content, discussed solutions for providing content in local languages. The third, on multilingual

applications, gave some useful input by, for example, presenting iEmail, an e-mail system that is interoperable with the global system. The last session, on international domain names, focused on the Arabic Domain Names pilot project that could serve as a role model for other regions. An international working group on multilingualism in cyberspace was suggested to create a long-term network on this subject

3.9 Action Line C9: media

A consultation meeting on Action Line C9 took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 16 to 19 October 2006. The constructive discussions resulted in the designation of UNESCO as the official facilitator for the Action Line and the preliminary sub-grouping was agreed as follows: freedom of expression, media education and information literacy, journalism training, community media, media regulation, media archives, content of media and the Internet, and research.

During the first IGF in Athens (29 October – 2 November 2006), UNESCO organized a workshop entitled “Openness in Cyberspace: the challenges of freedom of expression” on how to ensure the free flow of information, thus creating an open and transparent cyberspace. The discussions concentrated on new challenges for an open Internet, major regulation mechanisms at the national and transnational levels, and privacy and personal data protection in cyberspace. Participants referred to a number of additional challenges to freedom of expression, highlighting a variety of sources of control, including market regulation. There was a shared view that violation of free expression was becoming fairly generalized and that there was a need to approach security from a more holistic viewpoint. Regulation by law should be carefully applied, always respecting the fundamental principles of freedom of expression. Continued dialogue and awareness-raising initiatives are the best ways to improve the understanding of the complexity and variety of the issues, but it must be kept in mind that the Internet does not exist in a vacuum, and international standards should be respected and applied. A “Dynamic Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media on the Internet” was proposed, with the aim to further freedom of expression and promote free and independent media on the Internet. This feeds into the implementation of WSIS and IGF processes in the future.

3.10 Action Line C10: ethical dimensions of the Information Society

A consultation meeting on Action Line C10 took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 16 to 19 October 2006. The constructive discussions resulted in the designation of UNESCO as the official facilitator for the Action Line and the preliminary sub-grouping of the Action Line was agreed as follows: establishment of implementation modalities of the Geneva Plan of Action, mainstreaming of ethical dimensions of other Action Lines, and design and realization of concrete activities.

3.11 Action Line C11: international and regional cooperation

The Tunis Agenda requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation with members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination of the United Nations system (CEB), to establish within the CEB a United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), consisting of the relevant United Nations bodies and organizations, with the mandate to facilitate the implementation of WSIS outcomes. In considering lead agencies for this work, the text stipulates that CEB

should take into consideration the experience and activities of ITU, UNESCO and UNDP.

At its first regular meeting of 2006 on 7 April in Madrid, the CEB approved the establishment of the UNGIS. According to its terms of reference, as elaborated by the CEB High-Level Committee on Programmes and endorsed by CEB, the overall purpose of the UNGIS will be to act with multiple stakeholders as an information and coordination nexus for the inter-agency activities associated with the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

UNGIS will have a Chair and a Co-chair. The Chair will rotate on a yearly basis among ITU, UNESCO and UNDP. The Co-chair will be elected from among the other members of UNGIS on a rotational basis. Secretariat and logistical support will be provided by the chairing organizations.

UNGIS will establish a work plan that will be updated every two years. The Group will make maximum use of electronic working methods and will physically meet not more than once annually. It will cooperate closely, as appropriate, with United Nations regional commissions and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

The first UNGIS meeting took place in Geneva, at ITU Headquarters, on Friday, 14 July 2006.

As a follow-up, ECOSOC was requested by the Tunis Summit to oversee the United Nations system-wide follow-up of the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phases of the Summit. To this end, ECOSOC was requested to review CSTD's mandate and consider strengthening it, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach.

ECOSOC, during its substantive session in July 2006, adopted a resolution which requests the Commission to review and assess the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the Summit and advise the Council thereon, including through the elaboration of recommendations to the Council aimed at furthering the implementation of the Summit outcomes. Under the resolution, the Commission shall:

- Review and assess progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of Action Lines, recommendations and commitments contained in the outcome documents of WSIS;
- Share best and effective practices and lessons learned, identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them, and important measures for further implementation of WSIS outcomes;
- Promote dialogue and foster partnerships in coordination with other appropriate United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, to contribute to the attainment of the WSIS objectives and implementation of its outcomes, to use ICT for development and the achievement of internationally-agreed development goals, with the participation of Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations and other international organizations, according to their different roles and responsibilities.

On the regional level, most United Nations regional commissions have adopted regional action plans for WSIS implementation.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

The African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) was requested through a recommendation of the Second African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS, held in Accra, Ghana, from 2 to 4 February 2005. In addition, the Khartoum Summit of the African Union also urged the continent to develop an Action Plan on the WSIS. The Action Plan is based on the “Accra Commitments for Tunis 2005” and the vision defined by both the African Information Society Initiative (AISII) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The Regional Action Plan was prepared in order to implement the WSIS recommendations for rolling out the Information Society in the continent for the next 10 years. A Conference of African ICT Ministers was held in Cairo on 20 April 2006 to discuss follow-up of the WSIS, especially implementation of ARAPKE.

Regarding Internet governance, ECA launched a series of training courses on this theme for African policymakers, supported by the Diplo Foundation of Malta, the Canadian e-Policy Resource Centre (CePRC) and ICANN. The first training course was held from 2 to 6 July 2006 in Addis Ababa. Forty-one English-speaking African permanent secretaries, diplomats, directors and advisers from 19 countries took part in the training course. During and after the course, an online capacity-building curriculum for African policymakers and other stakeholders on ICT policies and strategies, especially on Internet governance, was put in place. The course module was added to the African e-Learning Initiative of ECA’s Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA) to enable African policymakers to gain access to the online manual from their respective locations. An online discussion forum for policymakers on Internet governance was also established after the end of the course to exchange views on the training activities and discuss follow-up activities.

At the recommendation of the training course, the Egyptian Government and ECA convened the African Preparatory Meeting on Internet Governance in Cairo. On the subject of Access to Information and Knowledge for Development, ECA organized, in collaboration with the IFLA Government Information and Official Publications Section (GIOPS) and Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE), a conference to fill the wide gap between the recommendations coming from the WSIS and the current state of readiness of African information and knowledge services institutions.

Following the last phase of the WSIS, two meetings were organized at the African level to review funding of e-strategies and make recommendations. First, the International Forum on Information Strategies and Investment (IFISI) held in Marrakesh in March 2006 is expected to be organized annually to contribute to finding solutions to the issue of funding of national, local and corporate ICT projects by bringing together project proponents and investors. Second is a conference entitled “ICT 4ALL, Tunis+1: ICT investment in Africa” organized by the Government of Tunisia and convened in Hammamet. The forum is aimed at contributing to the discussion on policy and strategy to channel domestic and foreign investment in Knowledge Economy development in Africa, one year after the Tunis Summit.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Following WSIS, the main focus of ESCAP is the provision of assistance to its member States in achieving global and regional mandates such as the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of WSIS and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) through application of ICT for development. For this purpose, ESCAP promotes the creation of a coordinated ICT policy and regulatory framework well integrated in the development process, application of ICT and space technology for sustainable social and economic development, capacity-building and human resources development, and strengthening the partnership among all ICT and space technology stakeholders.

To improve coherence and reduce duplication in regional cooperation activities in Information, Communication and Space Technology (ICST), ESCAP continues to lead and work closely with the members of the Regional Interagency Working Group on ICT, which comprises United Nations bodies and other IGOs working in ICT in the region, including ITU, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), the African Development Bank (ADB), UNESCO, UNDP, the Pacific Forum Secretariat and others.

To further strengthen its activities in building national capacity in ICT, ESCAP, with financial support from the Government of the Republic of Korea, established the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) in June 2006, as one of its regional institutions. As the development of the ICT sector is led by the private sector and many private sector companies are engaged in capacity-building as part of their corporate responsibility programmes, APCICT will strengthen its partnership with the private sector to enrich training content and improve financial sustainability.

On the basis of the success of activities carried out, and in response to requests from member States, ESCAP intends to further scale up and strengthen activities to equalize the benefits of science, technology, innovation and knowledge, with particular focus on ICST. This will be for a wider group of member States, and will bridge the national and regional digital divide, while at the macro level translating them into poverty reduction efforts and socio-economic development, promoting such initiatives with the applications of ICST.

As a way forward, ESCAP will concentrate more on analytical and advocacy work to promote the role of ICST in innovation and knowledge creation for socio-economic development among key stakeholders in the region, while assisting member States in the area of knowledge sharing, networking and management for development. ESCAP will apply the integrated and coordinated approach of mainstreaming ICST, achieving internationally-agreed development goals, such as MDGs, and assisting member States with policy analysis and tools, while monitoring and assessing achievements at the regional level.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Based on the WSIS Outcome, ESCWA has set up the Regional Plan for Building the Information Society, which will serve as the common scheme for ESCWA member States and Arab countries. Main focus areas are identified in line with those of the Geneva Plan of Action, and elaborate Action Lines are proposed under each main

theme. The Regional Plan of Action takes into account the Arab ICT Strategy, adopted by the Amman Arab Summit in March 2002. It is envisaged that each country will select and implement relevant actions within their needs and contexts. Aimed at stimulating partnership and implementation, a number of programmes were also suggested. As of January 2005, 37 projects have been proposed under the framework of the Regional Plan of Action. Of these, six are recommended by the Task Force on the Implementation of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Strategy.

ESCWA and Alcatel are facilitating the implementation of projects concerning employment creation and poverty alleviation through the use of ICTs. In July 2005, a Workshop on Novel Telecommunication Technologies for Socio-Economic Development was organized. The Workshop was aimed at launching the implementation of the three regional projects proposed by Alcatel. The Smart Community Project has been maintained in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In December 2006, the Expert Group Meeting on Open Source Software Solutions for the Public Sector in the Arab Region was jointly organized by ESCWA and the Information Communication Technology for Development in the Arab Region of UNDP, in collaboration with UNESCO. Under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), workshops on “Capacity-building for ICT policymaking” and “Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities” were organized by ESCWA and other relevant organizations in 2006.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

ICT applications are a fundamental part of UNECE activities at the subprogramme level. UNECE is developing implementation strategies to exploit the benefits of ICT in areas such as (a) environmental governance, where electronic tools are being developed to strengthen public access to environmental information and encourage digital democracy; (b) intelligent transport systems, vehicle safety devices and computerized transport documents; (c) electronic data reporting and dissemination, management of statistical information systems, statistical metadata editing, disclosure control, registers for business demographic and social statistics; and (d) trade, where standards and tools for electronic business and trade facilitation are being developed, including a project for United Nations electronic documents (UNeDocs) and standards for the electronic exchange of administrative and trade data.

In the area of economic cooperation and integration, UNECE has taken the lead in the establishment of a Working Group on ICT under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. In that context, a Regional Capacity-Building Seminar on ICT Policymaking was organized jointly with ESCAP in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 2006. Furthermore, training material on the legal aspects of ICT policy development is in progress. In 2007, UNECE, in cooperation with ESCAP, will organize two national capacity-building seminars on ICT policymaking as well as on legal aspects on ICT policy. UNECE, together with four other United Nations Regional Commissions, is also implementing a global UNDA project on ICT for disadvantaged communities. The project will produce an assessment paper on the status of ICT access points in the UNECE region, identifying successful business models for self-sustainability. The project will support knowledge sharing and cooperation among existing ICT access point networks in the UNECE region, as well as facilitate cooperation between these access point networks and similar ICT access point networks in Asia.

On the "Gender and ICT" subject, UNECE contributes to raising awareness on the gender digital divide within the framework of WSIS and promotes the use of ICT by small businesses run by women. Training workshops on ICT are part of the capacity-building programme under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs) Working Group on Gender and Economy. In 2006, a workshop in Haifa, organized with the Government of Israel, trained over 20 women entrepreneurs and included hands-on visits to innovative SMEs. Similar workshops will be organized in 2007. At the subregional level, UNECE organizes sessions on women-run businesses at the Central European Initiative (CEI) Summit Economic Forum. In 2006, a joint session with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) focused on the business environment, the role of Governments and advocacy programmes to urge policymakers to promote the use of ICT by women-run businesses.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Since 2000, Latin America and Caribbean countries engaged in regional conservation for the promotion of ICT for Development. The Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the second phase of WSIS, held in Rio de Janeiro from 8 to 10 June 2005, identified 30 urgent and relevant actions to be implemented between 2005 and 2007.

Under five chapters (Access and digital inclusion, Capacity-building and knowledge creation, Public transparency and efficiency, Policy instruments, Enabling environment), these goals constitute the regional plan eLAC2007. They aim at a stepwise implementation of the guiding principles and global goals of WSIS, and the long-term goals of the Summit and the MDGs for 2015. The eLAC goals are set for 2007 and constitute the 30 most urgent and most important of the WSIS goals. Since June 2005, three regional follow-up meetings have been held (Tunis, November 2005; Lisbon, April 2006; Santiago, November 2006). eLAC will be assessed in El Salvador by November 2007.

The implementation of eLAC2007 takes different formats: specific working groups set up for region-wide goals under eLAC2007, and international, regional, national or local initiatives and under-agency projects. eLAC2007 is managed by National Focal Points coordinated by a Regional Follow-up Mechanism formed by Ecuador, El Salvador, Brazil, and Trinidad and Tobago. ECLAC provides technical support for the regional mechanism and to working groups.

eLAC2007 working groups operate with the support of a virtual platform, www.eLAC2007.info. The objectives of their activities are to provide the knowledge base in critical areas to support the formulation of public policies, and to induce regional initiatives and projects. Representatives from public agencies, the private sector and civil society can participate in them. Eight working groups have been active in the subjects of Telework, Alternative Technologies, Software, Networks for Research and Education, ICT Industries, Electronic Government, Financing and Legislative Framework.

eLAC2007 is also implemented by different initiatives by international and regional agencies, national and local authorities, civil society and private sector projects.

Supported by ECLAC and the Canadian agency Institute for Connectivity in the Americas/International Development Research Centre (ICA-IDRC), the database on Projects and Experts on ICT in Latin America and the Caribbean (PROTIC, www.protic.org) compiles information on more than 1,000 ICT projects in the region under the five chapters of eLAC2007.

eLAC2007 also benefits from inter-agency cooperation. Among others, three initiatives are worth mentioning:

- On indicators and monitoring: the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC), an initiative of ECLAC ICA-PanAmerica-IDRC and @LIS of the European Commission, under the framework of the Conference of Statistic of the Americas (www.cepal.org/SocInfo/OSILAC);
- On e-government: eGe (e-Government Effectiveness Inter-Agency Task Force), by RedGealc of the Organization of American States (OAS), Development Gateway Foundation, IADB, World Bank, ICA-IDRC and ECLAC (www.ege-tf.org);
- On research and education networks: Latin American Cooperation of Research Networks (CLARA) (www.redclara.net) supported by @LIS of the European Commission; and
- On the other themes of International Cooperation, namely Internet Governance, Measuring the Information Society and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships.

4. Progress made in the implementation of WSIS main themes

4.1. The IGF

The second phase of WSIS, held in Tunis on 16 and 17 November 2005, requested the United Nations Secretary-General to convene “a new forum for a multi-stakeholder dialogue” — the IGF. The IGF was given a mandate to discuss the main public policy issues related to Internet governance, in order to foster the Internet’s sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development in an open and inclusive manner. This mandate is set out in Paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. The Government of Greece offered to host the first meeting of the IGF in Athens in 2006.

The Secretary-General asked his Special Adviser on WSIS, Mr. Nitin Desai, to start broad-based consultations on this mandate with the aim to develop a common understanding among all stakeholders on the nature and character of the IGF. Based on the outcome of the consultations, the Secretary-General on 2 March 2006 announced the establishment of a small secretariat, hosted by the United Nations Office at Geneva. It reports to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs in New York. The latter provides its administrative support. Funding for the IGF secretariat is through extrabudgetary contributions.

The United Nations Secretary-General on 17 May 2006 established an Advisory Group to assist him in convening the IGF. He appointed Mr. Nitin Desai, his Special Adviser on WSIS, as Chairman of the Group, which included 46 members from Governments, the private sector and civil society, including the academic and technical communities, representing all regions. The main task of the Group was to prepare the substantive agenda and programme for the first meeting of the IGF. It was made clear that any decision on preparing subsequent meetings, and on any future structure and future working methods of the IGF, would be taken in the light of the experiences made during the preparatory process for the Athens meeting.

The Advisory Group met on 22 and 23 May and 7 and 8 September in Geneva, and “Internet Governance for Development” was chosen as the overall theme of the Athens meeting, with capacity-building as the cross-cutting priority. The following four broad themes were proposed as the main topics for discussion:

- Openness: freedom of expression, free flow of information, ideas and knowledge;
- Security: creating trust and confidence through collaboration, particularly by protecting users from spam, phishing and viruses while protecting privacy;
- Diversity: promoting multilingualism, including IDN, and local content;
- Access: Internet connectivity, policy and cost, dealing with the availability and affordability of the Internet, including issues such as interconnection costs, interoperability and open standards.

The inaugural IGF meeting was held in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006. Attendance exceeded expectations: with 1,350 registered participants, almost twice as many people took part than were originally expected. Ninety-seven Member States and 397 delegates participated. There was also strong media interest, with 152 accreditations.

All the main sessions were rendered in real-time verbatim transcriptions, which were made available on the IGF website (<http://www.intgovforum.org/>) at the end of each session and remain there as an electronic archive. All main sessions were webcast and the meeting allowed for virtual participation via e-mail, chat rooms, text messaging and video conferencing. All sessions were moderated by professional journalists and television anchors. A summary of the main sessions by the secretariat was read out in the morning session of the last meeting day and is posted on the IGF website.

A total of 36 self-organized workshops were held parallel to the main sessions. The only condition imposed on the organizers was that the workshops be based on a multi-stakeholder approach; include all stakeholder groups and ensure that the subject matter is in line with the meeting’s four main themes. The aim of this concept was to bring different stakeholder groups together and thus create new dynamics. Several new initiatives emerged from the meeting as a result, the so-called dynamic coalitions — multi-stakeholder coalitions of people and institutions formed to work or collaborate on a particular topic or concern. The partners in these coalitions include Governments, corporations, international organizations, NGOs and academic institutions; they address issues such as spam, access to knowledge (A2K) and open standards. The IGF website provides space for all these initiatives.

The Athens meeting was generally hailed a success. One of its main achievements was to bring people together who would not normally meet, encouraging dialogue on issues of common interest among people who would not normally interact.

The Government of Brazil offered to host the next IGF meeting in Rio de Janeiro from 12 to 15 November 2007. The Governments of India and Egypt have offered to host the 2008 and 2009 IGF meetings respectively, while the Governments of Lithuania and Azerbaijan have both offered to host the 2010 meeting.

4.2. Partnership on measuring the Information Society

Considerable progress has been made in measuring the Information Society, as called upon in the Geneva Plan of Action⁴ and the WSIS Tunis Agenda.⁵ The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development was launched during UNCTAD XI in June 2004.⁶ Current partners include ITU, OECD, UNCTAD, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the United Nations Regional Commissions (ECLAC, ESCWA, ESCAP and ECA), the United Nations ICT Task Force/Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID), the World Bank and EUROSTAT. The Partnership has developed a core set of indicators in four areas: ICT infrastructure and access, ICT access and use in households, ICT use in business, and the ICT sector and trade in ICT goods. These guidelines serve as bases for current capacity-building activities with national statistics institutes, related ministries and the statistical community at large. A key objective of the Partnership is to enhance the capacities of national statistical organizations (NSOs) in developing countries and to build competence to develop statistical compilation programmes on the Information Society, based on internationally-agreed indicators. Since WSIS Tunis, regional workshops on ICT indicators have been held in the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, Western Asia and Africa. A number of national workshops have also been held. The Partnership also intends to develop an online global database of ICT indicators.

The Partnership's collaboration also constitutes the basis for harmonized data collection on ICT statistics at the international level. In February 2007, its core list of indicators was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission, which encouraged countries to use this core list in their data collection programmes. The Commission recognized that ICT is a rapidly evolving area, and encouraged the Partnership to continue to work to improve and update the list of indicators, especially in view of measuring use of ICT in education and Government, the contribution of ICT to economic growth and social development, and barriers to the use of ICT. These additional indicators will be particularly important for measuring WSIS targets, which focus on connecting schools, Government and other public institutions. The United Nations Statistical Commission encouraged the Partnership to assist countries in their capacity-building efforts for the collection of data for the ICT indicators.

Meanwhile, a number of different composite indices have been developed to track the development of ICTs and to measure the extent of the digital divide in both its

⁴ Paragraph 28.

⁵ Paragraphs 112–120.

⁶ Further information about the Partnership is available at <http://measuring-ict.unctad.org>.

domestic and international dimensions. These include the ICT Diffusion Index⁷, the Digital Opportunity Index (DOI)⁸ and the ICT Opportunity Index (ICT-OI).⁹ In view of the similarities of the two first indices, UNCTAD and ITU agreed, at the second phase of WSIS, to collaborate in their efforts to measure the magnitude of the digital divide and track global progress in the use of ICTs for development. The two organizations jointly developed the DOI, a composite ICT development index, which was launched with the publication of the World Information Society Report in June 2006. The DOI tracks progress in infrastructure development, and charts progress towards the WSIS goals and building of the Information Society. It is an important tool for international ICT performance evaluation and benchmarking, and is updated annually. Another WSIS-endorsed ICT indicator, the ICT-OI, was launched during the Tunis phase and updated in February 2007. ICT-OI is the result of the merger of ITU's Digital Access Index (DAI) and Orbicom's Monitoring the Digital Divide/Infostate conceptual framework. ICT-OI focuses on links between ICT development and user capabilities. The 2005 Monitoring the Digital Divide report also includes a chapter on Women in the Information Society, which includes a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of the rates and trends of ICT access and use by women globally as recommended in the WSIS Plan of Action. A subsequent phase will develop indicators to measure the gender dimensions of the knowledge society, including the digital divide.

Although the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development and other initiatives to improve the availability of core ICT indicators have made notable progress, one area that would require further attention is indicators for measuring the WSIS targets. While the core indicators cover important areas such as individual, household and business access to ICTs, many of the WSIS targets have a focus on connecting schools, Government and other public institutions. Efforts are needed to work with Governments to develop indicators for tracking this in order to monitor progress towards the WSIS targets.

5. Partnerships

GAID: A platform for Multi-stakeholder partnership

GAID was created by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in March 2006, and launched in Kuala Lumpur on 19 and 20 June 2006. In its inaugural year, GAID's energies focused on (a) developing and making operational an appropriate organizational structure; (b) defining its areas of priority and developing its business plan; (c) building collaborative links; and (d) raising awareness of GAID.

The Global Alliance was supported through 2006 by a light secretariat based in New York, composed of an Executive Coordinator, three project staff, a staff member seconded from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Malaysia, one consultant and three staff members temporarily seconded on a part-time basis from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

⁷ The Digital Divide: ICT Diffusion Index (UNCTAD 2003, 2004, 2005).

⁸ <http://www.itu.int/doi>.

⁹ http://www.orbicom.uqam.ca/projects/ddi2005/index_ict_opp.pdf.28.

GAID has laid a firm foundation for future activities, having (a) established its governance mechanisms; (b) agreed on its mission and objectives; (c) approved its areas of focus and a business plan for 2006–2007; (d) begun forming the organizational framework for partnerships through which the Global Alliance aims to leverage the resources, know-how, energy and will of various stakeholders to meet its objectives; (e) organized several successful meetings and engaged in other outreach activities; and (f) undertaken preparations for planned 2007 activities.

GAID was established on the basis of the principles and elements that emerged following a year and a half of international, multi-stakeholder consultation undertaken by the United Nations ICT Task Force. In the second quarter of 2006, nominations for the GAID Strategy Council were solicited, and the 60-member Council composed of 30 Governments and 30 representatives from the private sector, civil society and international organizations was formed to provide strategic guidance and vision for the Global Alliance. An 11-member Steering Committee, chaired by Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Board of Intel Corporation, was also formed to provide executive direction to and priority setting for the Global Alliance, as well as oversight and guidance to the secretariat.

Under the guidance of the Chair and with input from the Steering Committee and the Strategy Council, the mission of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development was agreed “to contribute to transforming the spirit and vision of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) into action and promoting the use of ICT for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”. The Global Alliance works toward fulfilling this mission by providing an inclusive, multi-stakeholder global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue and advocacy, and by catalysing multi-stakeholder, action-oriented partnerships encouraged under the GAID umbrella. In itself, GAID does not have any operational or implementing role. It provides multi-stakeholder input to intergovernmental bodies, including ECOSOC and CSTD.

A panel of high-level advisers has been constituted, providing a pool of policy and expert advice to the Global Alliance, and the GAID Network of Champions is a growing group of practitioners, experts and activists who facilitate the diffusion of knowledge and experience of innovative uses of ICT for the attainment of development goals, provide “bottom-up” flow of information on implementation of ICTD activities on the ground to inform policy discussions at the Global Forum and in the Steering Committee and the Strategy Council, and promote the implementation of the Global Alliance’s outreach efforts, as well as fostering formation of partnerships. Both networks are connected through Web-based groups maintained by the secretariat.

GAID’s Strategy Council decided at its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur that GAID will initially focus on the use of ICT in promoting the following four focus areas: (a) education; (b) health; (c) entrepreneurship; and (d) governance (specifically, enhancing citizens’ participation and promoting accountability, transparency and efficiency in governance processes).

A High-Level Meeting of the Steering Committee was convened under the chairmanship of Craig Barrett at the United Nations Headquarters on 27 September 2006 to discuss the draft business plan, which would provide direction

and a framework for the work of the Global Alliance through its first year. The Steering Committee approved the business plan in December 2006.

The second meeting of the Strategy Council was held on 27 February 2007 in Santa Clara, California, and focused on the next steps to reaching GAID's objectives, presenting Council members with the opportunity to discuss and identify ways in which they could contribute to the successful implementation of the GAID Business Plan.

GAID is creating a framework to foster policy debate and partnerships-for-action, as laid out in the business plan. The framework is composed of multiple networks operating for different purposes and goals. Secretariat-level relationships with partners are also valued and, on 31 December, the GAID secretariat initiated consultations with 21 organizations. Several Flagship Partnership Initiatives (FPIs) being formed under the umbrella of the Global Alliance are the first set of multi-stakeholder activities catalyzed by GAID to leverage joint resources and to spur visible action toward attaining its objectives across the four GAID focus areas.

Connect the World Initiative

The Connect the World Initiative was launched in June 2005 by ITU and 22 founding partners. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to help expand access to ICTs to the estimated 800,000 villages and 1 billion people worldwide for whom making a simple telephone call remains out of reach.

As present, Connect the World includes more than 50 partners from Government, the private sector, international and regional organizations, and civil society. It provides a platform for showcasing current development efforts, tracking progress and identifying both pressing needs as well as opportunities for collaboration.

Major partnerships were created in 2006 through Connect the World, including a new ITU-Grameen partnership to leverage the power of ICTs and microcredit financing to empower the poor called "ICT Empowerment Network". Three early projects have been announced within this network, including: (a) an initiative by a new Cambridge, United Kingdom-based consortium called "Enclusion" to develop low-cost rural connectivity solutions; (b) efforts to extend the Grameen Village phone model into more countries, starting with Qualcomm in Indonesia; and (c) microcredit loans for students to take courses at ITU Internet Training Centres, and financing and mentoring for graduates to start up their own ICT-related businesses, supported in part by a new \$1 million contribution from Cisco Systems Inc.

WSIS Stocktaking Database

By the end of 2006, there were more than 3,000 projects registered in the WSIS Stocktaking database and the number of the entries grows continuously.

A number of actions aimed at improving the database's functionality were taken during 2006. All existing entities were reviewed and any possible duplication was eliminated. All existing hyperlinks (Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)) were updated. In consultation with the WSIS Action Line Facilitators, and following the decisions of their open consultations, a number of sub-definitions were added for

particular Action Lines. The stocktaking database interface and database's search ability were adjusted accordingly.

In order to expand the functionality and interactivity of this publicly-available tool, some additional actions are planned for 2007. In particular, all WSIS stakeholders will have the possibility to install the stocktaking database Web interface on their own webpages. It is expected that this may have a significant impact on the growth of the number of entered project descriptions.

World Information Society Day

In line with the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/60/52 proclaiming 17 May as annual World Information Society Day. To mark the first World Information Society Day, ITU organized the ITU World Information Society Award Ceremony on Wednesday, 17 May 2006. The President of Senegal, Mr Abdoulaye Wade, and Professor Muhammed Yunis, Managing Director of Grameen Bank Bangladesh, were honoured with the Award.