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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2015 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

European Union (EU)

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "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" (to the 18th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

EU RESPONSE TO WSIS NON-PAPER – SEPTEMBER 2015

The EU and its Member States welcome many aspects of the non-paper, including the reaffirmation of the vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, and we see the non-paper as a useful starting point for addressing many aspects raised by Member States and stakeholders in their submissions. While reiterating our call for a concise, high-level outcome document, we would question, however, the overall lack of balance in the non-paper. Our initial written submission to the preparatory process called for the review to look across the full breadth of the WSIS agenda. Instead, the non-paper concentrates very heavily on information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and specifically on Internet issues, at the expense of other key elements of building the Information Society.

We are concerned that the non-paper makes only minor reference to the need to create an enabling environment for investment in ICTs. Also, the outcome document should fully address other important aspects of the Information Society, such as access to information and knowledge, the application of ICTs, media, cultural diversity and human rights.

WSIS is – and should remain – a development focused process. The WSIS overall review provides an important opportunity to focus on how ICTs can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. It will be important to underline the important role of the multi-stakeholder model and public-private partnerships in achieving the progress made over the last ten years.

This written response includes a set of 30 concrete proposals for the outcome document, numbered in the text below.

Preamble (paras 1-8)

We welcome the recognition of the challenges facing the most vulnerable countries, the emphasis on multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement and the acknowledgment of the preparatory work for the review led by CSTD, UNESCO and the ITU. **Proposal 1:** We propose that this section should recognise all stakeholders who contributed to the preparatory process for the review and welcome their input, including governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and academia.

We believe the preamble section focuses too narrowly on ICT infrastructure and innovation, which are considered in the relevant sections later in the text. **Proposal 2:** Instead, the preamble should describe the vision of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society that we are seeking to achieve. **Proposal 3:** The preamble should also welcome at the outset the significant overall progress that has been achieved in the last ten years, and recognise that there is much further work to do.

Proposal 4: We propose that the outcome document should re-affirm the vision of an Information Society in which everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge. It should emphasise our common aim for an Information Society which enables individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential. It should recognise that education, knowledge, information and communication remain at the core of human progress, endeavour and well-being.

We welcome the recognition that ICTs are both a means of implementation and target of the Sustainable Development Goals. The preamble could draw directly from the language of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, affirming our belief that the Information Society has a critical role to play to end poverty, to combat inequality, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, to protect human rights and promote gender equality and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet. **Proposal 5:** We suggest that in addition to recognising the role ICT plays in achieving the 2030 Agenda, reference should be made to the importance of ICT to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda

Promoting access to ICTs and the Internet for all, as well as the ability of people to use and create ICTs, is fundamental to the WSIS vision. The preamble states that particular attention should be paid to particular types of "vulnerable countries", as well as specific challenges faced by a number of groups. **Proposal 6:** As many of those listed are not referred to later in the non-paper, we propose that those listed are cited as examples, rather than a complete list of the groups or countries that deserve particular attention. We also feel that there is merit in the inclusion of older persons among those facing specific challenges.

Many innovations have transformed the ICT landscape and presented new opportunities for ICTs to contribute to sustainable development. These include fixed and wireless broadband, mobile internet, smartphones and tablets, cloud computing, social media and big data. We recognize that ICTs offer great and decisive opportunities for public management and thus encourage the use of open government and open data.

Proposal 7: We propose that the preamble should include a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. We welcome the inclusion of a section on human rights later in the non-paper, and comment further on it below, but these rights should also be reaffirmed at the beginning of the document.

Proposal 8: We propose that the preamble includes a reference to the Netmundial Declaration and its outcomes.

Digital Divide (paras 9-15)

We welcome the evidence-based approach to this section, which draws on the preparatory work for the review.

We welcome the paragraph related to broadband and digital divide. **Proposal 9:** The section should be expanded to include a clear identification of risks and solutions. The evolution of technology and services is not the main driver of the digital divide but rather the lack of enabling environments for investment, balanced regulatory measures and market competition. Affordable broadband should be identified as a priority using all the right tools to attain that goal.

A paragraph on the importance of assuring e-skills for citizens to reap the benefits of ICT and the Internet, would be another useful addition to help to identify solutions to attaining the WSIS goals.

We welcome reference to the gender digital divide and propose that the outcome document should expand on this. The CSTD report provides evidence about the gender divide and the EU submission to the review noted the conclusions by DESA that disparities between men and women in terms of education, income and social attitudes are causes of this.

Proposal 10: In addition to access to ICTs, we propose that the review should recognise the broader range of issues in the gender digital divide in particular education for women and girls, but also including the participation and representation of women in the media, the importance of social media and women's employment in the ICT and media industries. UNESCO's Global Report on the Status of Women in the New Media is one example of research in this area.

While the importance of data is noted elsewhere in the non-paper, ICT can also assist in providing quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data which can bridge the digital divide.

We note the reference to the ITU's Connect 2020 Agenda. This could be a useful source of targets and indicators on infrastructure development, although we do not believe that individual sets of targets should be referenced in the outcome document.

Proposal 11: We believe the review should be consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reference be made to target 9.c: "Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020".

We recognize the need to support the establishment of digital ecosystems in all countries, including developing countries, in order to ensure that these countries be not only consumers but also producers of digital products, contents and services.

We recognize the need to address the digital divide not only with respect to infrastructures, but also regarding digital use and literacy.

We recognize the need to promote, through digital means, access to education and training, with a particular focus on those who are excluded such as marginalized communities.

We consider that the development of ICTs has a decisive role to play in tackling global warming and environmental change, and that it is both a tool and a goal to do so.

ICT for development (paras 16-19)

The EU and its Member States, along with many other stakeholders, have emphasised the importance of aligning the WSIS Action Lines with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. **Proposal 12:** We propose that the outcome document should summarise the correlation of WSIS Action Lines with the Sustainable Development Goals, drawing on the matrix launched at the WSIS Forum earlier this year. It might also make reference to para 15 of the draft 2030 Agenda which says that "*the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies*".

We agree with the reference to resource efficiency and the disposal of ICT waste. Action Line C7 sets out a range of ICT applications which can help meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. **Proposal 13:** We propose that the outcome document should recognise all of these and not concentrate only on resources efficiency and waste.

Human Rights (paras 20-21)

As noted above, we believe that a re-affirmation of our shared commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms should be included in the preamble of the outcome document. **Proposal 14:** Para 20. should not include a specific reference to the right to development, and should avoid any suggestion that this constitutes a "fundamental freedom".

In consistency with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a reference should be made to target 16.10: "Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements".

We welcome the reaffirmation that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to privacy in accordance with resolution A/RES/69/166. However, this theme should be treated on a par with other WSIS issues, with a fuller reflection on what has been achieved, the challenges and priorities for the future.

The EU submission to the review noted that there remain serious threats to freedom of expression and plurality of information in many parts of the world. Online censorship, restrictions in social media, website blocking, efforts to restrict civil society space and other measures are undermining human rights and fundamental freedoms. In many parts of the world, journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders suffer from fear of being subjected to attacks, reprisals, intimidation, politically-motivated prosecutions and arbitrary libel suits. There is also a lack of protection of journalistic sources. We are concerned that the non-paper does not mention any of these issues.

Proposal 15: We propose that all of these serious threats should be explicitly stated in the outcome document and that the document should urge all stakeholders to ensure that all people are able to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms online. **Proposal 16:** We propose that the outcome document should call for a safe and enabling environment for journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders.

These issues are closely linked to other content issues, such as the importance of multilingualism, the preservation of cultural content and the development of relevant local content and applications, and these links should be clear in the outcome document. All of these issues support people's ability to create and share information and knowledge and to exercise their right to freedom of expression online, as well as promote greater connectivity and the social and economic benefits of ICTs.

Proposal 17: We believe the outcome document should recognize the role of ICTs in enabling education for all, multilingualism, cultural practice and preservation of cultural heritage, and the development of the sciences and technical innovation, constitute key contributions to the holistic goals of sustainable development.

Internet governance (paras 22-26)

We welcome the general agreement that the governance of the Internet should be open, inclusive and transparent and the affirmation of key principles from Geneva and Tunis.

Calls for "further internationalization" of Internet governance cannot imply that Internet governance should be managed only between national governments and inter-governmental organisations, and instead should strengthen the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance. **Proposal 18:** Instead, in line with our original written submission, we propose that the outcome document should call for Internet governance to be more inclusive and accessible, particularly for developing countries.

We do not believe that the call for "full implementation of Enhanced Cooperation" is appropriate. The Tunis Agenda describes enhanced

cooperation as a "process". Given the pace of innovation and the constant emergence of new issues to address, that process needs to continue to develop – it should not be described as "full" or "complete". Our original written submission said that "mechanisms for enhanced cooperation should continue to be flexible and involve all stakeholders, to ensure that we are able to respond effectively to the pace of innovation and change, and to ensure that processes are inclusive and accessible, particularly for developing countries." **Proposal 19:** We propose that the outcome document should call for continued implementation of enhanced cooperation between all stakeholders.

We welcome the proposed extension of the mandate of the IGF. **Proposal 20:** In line with the EU submission to the review, we propose the IGF's mandate should be extended for ten years. We think it is important that there is a formal, periodic opportunity to review the IGF and its role, in light of developments. We believe a ten year mandate is appropriate. We note that the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which comprises 47 Member States, called in June this year [1] for a ten year extension.

Proposal 21: We acknowledge that the mandate of the IGF as set out in the Tunis Agenda has been effective, and propose that the IGF must retain its mandate and essential character as an open and accessible forum as set out in the Tunis Agenda. The IGF in its current form has "established itself as an essential forum for international and regional cooperation in the area of internet governance, bringing stakeholders together to share best practice and shape policy debate", as the EU submission said. There has been much considered discussion on how to improve the IGF, particularly in the CSTD Working Group on this subject, and we support the work underway to implement the recommendations of the CSTD Working Group on IGF improvements, including the sustainability of its funding and ensuring that its outcomes are more visible and can be taken forward by other relevant fora dealing with Internet Governance issues.

Cyberspace (paras 27-29)

The title of this section is potentially confusing and it is not always clear which issues are being addressed. **Proposal 22:** We propose that these issues are included in the 'ICT for Development section, between paragraphs 17 and 18 of the non-paper.

Proposal 23: In every effort to ensure universal Internet access or to accelerate global interconnectedness, building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, ensuring resilient networks and ICT solutions, and promoting good cyber hygiene constitute vital components. We believe this should be reflected in the relevant sections of text.

Proposal 24: We also propose to replace references to "cyber security" with the appropriate Action Line heading: "building confidence and security in the use of ICTs". We continue to believe that the review should not duplicate work which is being carried on elsewhere, for example in the UNGGE on Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

An enabling environment (proposal for new section)

The non-paper does not include a section on creating an enabling environment. **Proposal 25:** We propose that the outcome document should fully address the issues involved in building an enabling environment. This is absolutely critical to promoting investment, bridging the digital divide and building the Information Society.

The EU submission to the review emphasized how the very significant progress that has been made over the last ten years has been driven by private sector investment responding to consumer demand. "Infrastructure development has largely been financed by the private sector, working in partnership with governments and other stakeholders. The World Bank reports that over the 2000s, the Bank supported ICT sector reforms which helped attract an estimated $30 billion in private investment for mobile infrastructure in the least developed countries". **Proposal 26:** We propose that the outcome document should explicitly recognise the importance of private sector investment.

Proposal 27: The draft should also focus on those steps which over the last ten years have been demonstrated to promote private sector investment and affordable connectivity:

- opening telecommunication markets to competition
- privatising incumbent national operators
- developing regulatory environments that are transparent, predictable and non-discriminatory
- developing and implementing effective broadband strategies
- allocating spectrum efficiently
- promoting infrastructure sharing models, which reduce market entry, infrastructure and operating costs
- building strong public/private partnerships
- avoiding "luxury" taxation on devices and disproportionate licensing fees in order to increase tax revenues in the long term
- fostering universal access, for example using community centres, schools and libraries
- promoting local language content and access to social media.
- Promoting ICT interoperability
- Promoting digital and innovation ecosystems in both developed and developing countries.

International public finance has an important role to play, particularly in the most vulnerable countries. But by itself, public funding will not achieve our goals. **Proposal 28:** We propose that the outcome document should set out these steps towards an enabling environment, which have proved over the last ten years to be critical to promoting private sector investment and delivering affordable connectivity.

<u>Follow-up and review (paras 30-37)</u>

We welcome the focus on capacity-building and the encouragement of a prominent profile for ICT in the new mechanisms established by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. **Proposal 29:** It is widely accepted that the Digital Solidarity Fund was not a successful model and we propose that the outcome document should not call for a review of options for its future.

Proposal 30: We propose that references to "technology transfer" should follow the language of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the words "as mutually agreed".

We do not believe that priority should be given only to technical challenges such as IPv6 and Internet Exchange Points, important though those issues are. The outcome document should focus on our overall aim to achieve a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society and to connect ICTs to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We welcome the call for increased efforts to improve data collection and analysis, but this should not only focus on ICT connectivity but should look across the whole WSIS agenda.