Overview of WSIS-related activities, second semester 2008, and some reflections on the use of ICTs as a tool for poverty reduction and reaching the MDGs

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Purpose of this presentation

- The purpose of this presentation is to give you an overview of the most important WSIS-related activities that took place since the last CSTD-session in May 2008.

- This overview is far from complete, the "Information Society Agenda" on the website of the Global Knowledge Partnership lists for 2008 more than 300 international and regional events related to ICTs, not to mention all the national events, that are not listed in the GKP website. All these events are linked one way or the other to the emerging Information Society. As ICTs are penetrating all ways of life, it becomes more and more difficult to identify specific "WSIS implementation" events.

- Regarding the events, we follow the timeline approach used already last year, going from June to November 2008. Furthermore, we shall include some important events planned for December 2008 and early 2009.

- In the second part, we would like to reflect on the use of ICTs for poverty reduction and reaching the MDGs.

Proceedings of the third Action Line Facilitator's meeting and of the 2008 Global Event on measuring the IS

- The CSTD heard, during its last session in May 2008, oral reports from the third Action Line Facilitator's meeting, which took place on 23 May 2008, and from the "2008 Global event on Measuring the Information Society", which took place in parallel to the CSTD session. From both events, written summaries are now available on the ITU website at

  http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/consultations.html

  for the third Action Line Facilitator's meeting and

  http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/conferences/geneva08/index.html for the event on Measuring the Information Society.

  For those CSTD members who follow closely the WSIS follow-up, I do recommend these two documents for reading, both are important for any future discussions.

OECD Ministerial Meeting:
The Future of the Internet Economy

- The OECD Ministerial Meeting on the Future of the Internet Economy took place 17-18 June 2008 in Seoul, Korea. The event focused on social, economic and technological trends shaping the development of the Internet Economy. The Summit forged broad principles that can provide an enabling policy environment for the Internet Economy.
- The Summit documents, including
  - The Seoul Declaration for the Future of the Internet Economy, adopted by the OECD member countries and ministers from Chile, Egypt, Estonia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Latvia, Senegal and Slovenia. The ultimate goal of the Declaration is to build confidence in, and secure the future of, the Internet economy.
  - Chair's Summary
  - Shaping policies for the future of the Internet Economy
  - Shaping policies for the future of the Internet Economy: Annexes, including Recommendations and Guidances.
- The Summit documents can be downloaded from the OECD website at http://www.oecdministerialseoul2008.org
- A special mention deserves the excellent OECD Report on "Global Opportunities for Internet Access Development", available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/53/40596368.pdf

ITU meetings on ICTs and climate change

- Climate change is a concern for all of humanity and requires efforts on the part of all sectors of society, including the information and communication technologies (ICTs) sector. Although ICTs contribute only an estimated 2.5 per cent of total greenhouse gases, this share is set to grow as usage of ICTs expands globally, growing at a faster rate than the general economy. ICTs are thus part of the *cause* of global warming, but they can also be part of the *solution*, for instance through the promotion of carbon displacement technologies. ICTs are also vital in monitoring the spread of global warming.

- As part of a major new initiative on the overall topic of ICTs and climate change, ITU organised two Symposia on ICTs and Climate Change. The first was held in Kyoto, Japan 15-16 April 2008, hosted by MIC Japan, and the second was held in London, UK, on 17-18 June, hosted by BT. The Symposia proceedings are available on the ITU website.

32nd International Public ICANN Meeting

- The 32nd International Public ICANN Meeting took place in Paris 22-26 June 2008. More than 1'600 participants gathered, making the meeting ICANN's biggest ever public meeting. Besides organisational questions, questions of IPv6 and of Internationalized Domain Names, the meeting discussed the introduction of new generic TLDs.

- Following the meeting, it is likely that ICANN may approve more generic TLDs. With suggestions ranging from a couple of dozen to thousands of TLDs that could be approved, this would be a significant opening up of the number of TLDs, up from the six that were available back in 1985 when the domain name system began. Industry is still wary of the ICANN plan for new generic TLDs and some are afraid of high costs, confusion and cyber-squatting. ICANN's Government Advisory Committee called for protection of country, territory and place names, so that governments will be able to stop commercial registrars selling off their virtual real estate.

ECOSOC Substantive Session 2008

- At its Substantive session 2008 in New York, ECOSOC adopted, at its 34th meeting on 18 July 2008, without a vote, the draft resolution of the CSTD on assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

- Next, the Council adopted, without vote, the four CSTD draft decisions, on a) participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions, b) participation of academic entities in the work of that Commission, c) the report of the Secretary-General on science, technology and innovation to be submitted to the Commission at its twelfth session, and d) the report of the Commission on its eleventh session and provisional agenda and documentation for the twelfth session of the Commission.

World Conference on Agricultural Information and IT

This conference, held in Tokyo, Japan from 24 – 28th August, saw the coming together of the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD) and the Asian Federation of Information Technology in Agriculture (AFITA). Discussion was therefore very wide ranging, and covered topics such as standards for the sharing of agricultural information, new ways of engaging users, mobile phone and ICT adoption by farmers and the use of networked sensors for precision farming. Some common themes running through the varied debates included:-

• The ways in which new social web technologies can be harnessed for the communication of agricultural information

• The growing importance of public-private partnerships in this area, but the need to be clear on content ownership and governance in such arrangements

• Social impacts and intergenerational differences in terms of relative ICT literacy and adoption on the one hand, and farming knowledge on the other

• The need to always "listen to the farmer" – to seek full participation - when developing ICT-supported projects

The Third Access to Knowledge Conference (A2K3)

- The Information Society Project (ISP) at Yale Law School hosted the third Access to Knowledge Conference (A2K3) September 8-10, 2008, in Geneva. Some four hundred decision-makers and experts on global knowledge gathered to discuss the urgent need for policy reforms. UNESCO and UNCTAD/CSTD Secretariat were present at the meeting.

- The meeting focused on the A2K movement, on A2K and Human Rights, on A2K and WIPO's Development Agenda, on A2K and International Trade, on copyright exceptions and limitations, on open business models, on technologies for access, on open access to scientific literature, on closing the knowledge gap etc.

- My conclusion: The A2K movement developed in parallel to WSIS. There is a need to bring the practitioners of the A2K movement (who look more at intellectual property issues, at WIPO and at its Development Agenda) and the WSIS community closer together.

- Most contributions are available at   http://a2k3.org/

Informal consultation meeting on the cluster of WSIS-related events (1)

- On 15 September 2008, ITU and UNESCO held an informal multi-stakeholder consultation meeting on the 2009 cluster of WSIS related events. The meeting was chaired by the ITU Deputy Secretary-General and the Director of the Information Society Division at UNESCO.

- The Chair recalled the outcome of the Action Line Facilitator's meeting of 23 May 2008, where it was proposed inter alia that
  - Action Line event should be concentrated on one week;
  - meetings could have plenary sessions and parallel meetings, a format similar to the IGF;
  - the cluster should concentrate on a number of themes and not necessarily on all action lines;
  - the name of the cluster should be changed.

- Participants agreed that the cluster of WSIS-related events needs to be reformatted.

Informal consultation meeting on the cluster of WSIS-related events (2)

- The following proposals were put forward, inter alia:

  -Action Line Facilitators should report to the CSTD before the CSTD meeting. The linkage between the Action Line meetings and the CSTD should be stronger. It could give the opportunity to CSTD members to participate in Action Line Facilitation meetings;

  - The three meetings taking place in May (WSIS Action Line Facilitation cluster, the IGF Consultations and the CSTD session) should be more coordinated;

  - Diversity of participants should be increased and permanent missions should be more involved;

  - The added value of the facilitation of WSIS Action Lines should be stressed;

  - The cluster should not become a heavy process.

- The meeting further discussed the format and the name. More consultations should take place by electronic means.

- A Summary of the meeting is available on the ITU-WSIS website at http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/docs/consultations/sep2008/final-report.doc

UNGIS-meeting 2008 (1)

- The third UNGIS meeting took place on 19 September 2008 at ITU in Geneva. It was opened by the Secretary General of ITU and chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of ITU and the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO in charge of the Communication.
- The meeting was attended by ITU, UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNIDO, ILO, UNRWA, UPU, WMO, UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime) and the CEB-Secretariat from Geneva.
- UNCTAD was again elected as co-chair for 2008.
- The meeting discussed the main outcomes if the Action Line Facilitator's meeting of 23 May 2008 and of the open consultations on the cluster of WSIS-related events held at ITU on 15 September 2008. Some of the proposals that were put forward are:
  - the cluster could be organized with a opening and a closing plenary and parallel sessions on Action Lines in-between
  - the meetings could concentrate on progress made in the implementation of WSIS goals and commitments etc.
  - the event could be organized along themes, e.g. ICTs for the MDGs, financial issues, security, open access to scientific literature etc.. Country case studies could be coordinated among UN Agencies and presented during the event.

UNGIS-meeting 2008 (2)

- It was decided that further consultation should take place regarding the cluster of events.
- The meeting discussed further the ECOSOC recommendation to UNGIS with regard to financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of ICT for Development. No decisions were taken. The Chairman invited the Agencies present to send their views to the Secretariat (ITU).
- The meeting discussed the relationship between UNGIS and UNDG, and strategies and actions for mainstreaming ICT for Development into country programmes. UNESCO expressed the view that ICT4D are (unfortunately) not a high priority topic in the UNDAF process and questioned participants on how UNGIS could, in the One UN Process, help UN field offices to realize the challenge of ICT4D at national policy level.
- The meeting finally discussed the work plan of UNGIS and decided to hold electronic consultations among the UNGIS-members on a number of subjects, including the question of holding more than one meeting per year. ITU invited participants to join ITU in setting up a UN Pavillion during Telecom World 2009. UNESCO proposed to hold, during Telecom World, an event on the use of ICTs for people with disabilities.

Disaster Risk Management in the Information Age

- The World Bank organized, in Washington, on 8-9 October 2008, a joint training workshop on Disaster Risk Management in the Information Age, in order to mark the International Day on Disaster Risk Reduction. The meeting was organized by the Global Information and Communication Technologies (GICT) Department of the Bank, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the Urban, Water and Disaster Management Unit of the LA and Caribbean Region of the Bank (LCSUW) and *info*Dev.

- Between 1980 and 2006, natural disasters killed more than 2 million people worldwide and reported damages totalled 1.2 trillion USD. For example, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake caused about $5 billion damages. There were 5,210 disasters worldwide between 1991 and 2005.

- The key objective of the workshop was to raise awareness on the opportunities to improve the impact of disaster risk management projects via innovative and effective use of ICT and to understand better key lessons learned, success factors and good practices. The Workshop identified challenges and key issues, best practices and critical success factors, latest trends, solutions and technologies, as well as the policy recommendations and opportunities for mainstreaming solutions.

Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to meet Parliamentarians' information and knowledge needs

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), together with the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) organized a one-day event in Geneva on 8 October for the exchange of perspectives on the challenges faced by parliaments in obtaining the information and knowledge they require to function effectively. The meeting focused on the evolving needs of parliamentarians, the role that can be played by library and research services, and the development of good practices.

MobileActive08: "Unlocking the potential of Mobile Technology for social impact

- MobileActive08, jointly organized by <u>MobileActive.org</u> and the <u>Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT)</u>, took place from 13-15 October 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the event was "Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Technology for Social Impact". The event was the largest international civil society event to date focusing on this topic. Participants included key stakeholders and NGO/nonprofit practitioners using mobile phones in innovative and creative ways; mobile technologists; researchers studying the use of mobile phones; government officials; donors, and representatives from the telecommunications industry.

- Participants explored how mobile phones are used to advance civil society work, assessed the current state of knowledge in the use and effectiveness of mobile technology to advance social action, and investigated trends, needs and investment opportunities.

- The conference was intentionally designed to be cross-disciplinary as learning and experiences span various disciplines in this emerging field. However, specific attention was given to the role of mobile technology in health, human rights, economic development, advocacy, education, citizen journalism and democratic participation

UNSG's Report on WSIS implementation and follow-up in the Second Committee

- The UN General Assembly (GA), in its resolution 62/182 of 31 January 2008, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the GA at its sixty-third session, through ECOSOC, the Report being prepared for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the status of implementation of and follow-up of WSIS.

- Therefore, on 23 October 2008 , the UNSG 2008 Report on "Progress made in the implementation and follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" was presented to the Second Committee, in view of its presentation in the GA.

- Unfortunately, the corresponding ECOSOC-Resolution 2008/31 will not be presented to the GA. It seems that the GA never discusses ECOSOC Resolutions. This is not a WSIS-specific problem, it is a structural problem which would need to be addressed by Governments when addressing UN systems reform (this way of working automatically leads to work overlap between ECOSOC and the Second Committee and can lead to incoherence).

Launch of the Global Networks Initiative

From the website of the Initiative:

"In an effort to protect and advance the human rights of freedom of expression and privacy, a diverse coalition of leading information and communications companies, major human rights organizations, academics, investors and technology leaders launched on 28 October 2008 the Global Network Initiative.

From the Americas to Europe to the Middle East to Africa and Asia, companies in the information and communications industries face increasing government pressure to comply with domestic laws and policies that require censorship and disclosure of personal information in ways that conflict with internationally recognized human rights laws and standards.

The Initiative is founded upon the Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy – supported by specific implementation commitments and a framework for accountability and learning – that provide a systematic approach for companies, NGOs, investors, academics and others to work together in resisting efforts by governments that seek to enlist companies in acts of censorship and surveillance that violate international standards."

Participants, among other, are Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, the Annenberg school of Communications, HR Watch, the EFF etc. More info is at
http://www.globalnetworkinitiative.org

Authors, publishers and Google reach a landmark settlement

The Association of American Publishers (AAP), and Google announced on 28 October 2008 a groundbreaking settlement agreement on behalf of a broad class of authors and publishers worldwide that would expand online access to millions of in-copyright books and other written materials in the U.S. from the collections of a number of major U.S. libraries participating in . The agreement, reached after two years of negotiations, would resolve a class-action lawsuit brought by book authors and the Authors Guild, as well as a separate lawsuit filed by five large publishers as representatives of the AAP's membership. The class action is subject to approval by the US District Court for the Southern District of NY.

- The agreement promises to benefit readers and researchers, and enhance the ability of authors and publishers to distribute their content in digital form, by significantly expanding online access to works through Google Book Search, an ambitious effort to make millions of books searchable via the Web. The agreement acknowledges the rights and interests of copyright owners, provides an efficient means for them to control how their intellectual property is accessed online and enables them to receive compensation for online access to their works.

- If approved by the court, the agreement would provide more access to out of print books, additional ways to purchase copyrighted books, millions of books online, free access from US libraries and compensation to authors and publishers.

- The settlement was especially welcomed by the UN National Federation of the Blind, because the settlement would have a profound and positive impact on the ability of blind people to access the printed word.

33rd International Public ICANN meeting

- The Government of Egypt was hosting, from 2-7 November 2008, the 33rd International Public ICANN Meeting. Over 1,000 delegates from around the world gathered for the meeting, which was opened by Dr. Tarek Mohamed Kamel, Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology.

- The meeting made further progress towards the implementation of new generic Top Level Domains and the global expansion of the domain name system. In October, ICANN released a 200 pages draft Guidebook that provides information for those interested in applying for a gTLD, and invited feedback on the draft. The reactions show that the draft will have to be modified, as it generated discontent and controversy.

- The Cairo meeting saw also further progress towards the introduction of internationalised domain names (IDNs) which, when combined with new gTLDs, will create a range new possibilities for the internet users of the world.

Lyon Conference for Digital Solidarity

- On November 24th 2008, Lyon will be hosting an international conference on digital solidarity, at the invitation of President Nicolas Sarkozy, on a proposal made by the President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, and under the French presidency of the European Union. Almost 300 personalities are expected, including several heads of state and government and leading members of territorial authorities, international organisations, NGOs, companies and foundations.

- "This conference is a follow-up to the World Summits on the Information Society held in 2003 and 2005 in Geneva and Tunis, which gave rise to the creation of the Global Digital Solidarity Fund and the World Digital Solidarity Agency. Today, at a time when the digital gap is ceaselessly expanding on a world-wide level, the Lyon Conference will bring all the main individuals trying to bridge the digital divide together for a whole day's work, so enabling concerted world action to be taken for providing better answers to the issues at stake in this key sector of development".

- Redefining major issues, creating networks and a commitment are the conference's main objectives.

ICT 2008 Event: "I"s to the future: Invention – Innovation - Impact

- The biennial ICT Event (formerly called the "IST Event") is the most important forum for discussing research and public policy in information and communication technologies at European level. It shall take place from 25-27 November 2008 in Lyon, France. The ICT Event brings together researchers and innovators, policy and business decision-makers working in the field of digital technologies. The ICT Event:

  - Presents Europe's future priorities for research funding in the ICT area;
  - Examines crucial issues of public policy for stimulating innovation through ICT development and uptake;

  - Creates opportunities to establish research and business partnerships and simply keep up to date in what is happening in various ICT research fields.

  The ICT Event is organised by the European Commission's Directorate General for the Information Society and Media and is hosted by the French Presidency of the European Union. The Directorate expects 4000 to 5000 participants.

ICT4All Forum – Tunis+3

- As a celebration of the third anniversary of the second phase of WSIS in Tunisia in November 2005, the Tunisian Government, in collaboration with UNCTAD, IU, GAID and ECA and in partnership with ADB, World Bank, the Arab Society for Intellectual Property and UTICA, shall organize the third edition of the "ICT4All Forum" in Hammamet (Tunisia) on 27-28 November 2008.

- The 2008 edition will focus on "Broadband, industry and content for development", with a view to shaping the opportunities in this field, to promote investment and partnership, stimulate growth and develop knowledge economy, with special attention to the Mediterranean area, Africa and developing countries.

- A technical exhibition will be part of the event.

ICEGOV 2008

The 2nd International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV2008) will take place in Cairo, Egypt during 1 - 4 December 2008, co-organized by United Nations University IIST Center for Electronic Governance, and German University in Cairo. The conference will continue pursuing the goal of building a global community of practice for Electronic Governance.

The third Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Meeting

- The third IGF shall take place in Hyderabad, India from 3-6 December 2008. It will will be open to all WSIS-accredited entities, as well as other institutions and persons with proven expertise and experience in matters related to Internet governance. Following broad-based consultations through the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), the proposed agenda for the Third Meeting of the IGF will be as follows:

  - Reaching the next billion;
  - Promoting cyber-security and trust;
  - Managing critical Internet resources;
  - Taking stock and the way forward;
  - Emerging issues - the Internet of tomorrow

  The overall theme of the meeting will be 'Internet for all'. This theme complements that of the 2008 World Telecommunications and Information Society Day, 'connecting people with disabilities'. The theme underscores the importance of ensuring that we include the world's 650 million people with disabilities as we move towards giving internet access to the next billion people.

Follow-up of the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes in Western Asia

ESCWA intends to hold a Conference entitled "Follow-up on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes in Western Asia" in the first half of 2009. The main objectives of the conference are as follows:

- Reviewing and following-up on the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, the Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for building the Information Society in Western Asia, the Arab ICT Strategy, and other national strategies and plans of action.

- Identifying new projects for inclusion in the RPoA and in other plans of action, including the one related to the updated Arab ICT Strategy;

- Updating the RPoA and making recommendations for the enhancement of ICT strategies and plans of action, in light of accumulated experiences.

Some interesting new publications

- ITU published in Summer a new Report "Measuring ICT Availability in Villages and Rural Areas". The report draws largely on a presentation held by Michael Minges in December 2007 at the WTI (World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators) meeting in Geneva. The Report can be downloaded from http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/material/Measuring%20ICT_web.pdf

- The United Nations Foundation and the Vodaphone Group Foundation have published a Report on "Wireless Technology for Social Change: Trends in Mobile Use by NGOs." The Report is available at http://www.unfoundation.org/vodafone/communications_publication_series.asp

- With the use of mobile phones gaining in popularity, the question of the need of ICTs beyond the mobile phone arises. While mobile phones certainly have had a great impact in rural areas, a new study by Ian Howard commissioned by APC argues that the need for telecentres and affordable internet connections continues to exist, as such centres cater to rural and niche markets the way large mobile phone companies cannot. The APC study report is available at http://www.apc.org/en/node/7237/

Part 2

Some reflections on the use of ICTs as a tool for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs

ICTs as a tool for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs?

- The WSIS outcome texts contain a number of references to poverty reduction and to the MDGs, e.g. in paragraphs 2,14,41,43 and 51 of the Geneva Declaration and in paragraphs 23f), 85, 87, 90 i), 91, 95, 1000 and 114 c) of the Tunis Agenda.
- But if we have a closer look at these paragraphs, we have to realize that the WSIS outcome texts to do **not contain a clear conceptual framework** how to make use of ICTs for poverty reduction and for achieving the MDGs. There are some recommendations on strategy, but they are dispersed throughout the documents.
- The 10 targets and the more than 160 recommendations and commitments in itself are not a strategy.
- The absence of a clear conceptual framework may be one of the reasons why the WSIS recommendations and commitments are very often **not** reflected in UNDAFs and CCAs (and also **not** in the PRSPs).

Strategies for GDP growth are not necessarily strategies for poverty reduction

- There is no doubt that ICTs have an impact on the GDP (but be careful, it could also be the other way round). Connectivity is important. Countries with low connectivity and costly broadband access cannot compete on a level playing field (to take Tom Friedman's picture). But this is the macro-economic view.

- At the company level, in a global economic environment, ICTs can also trigger a race to the bottom (outsourcing to the cheapest places worldwide).

- And most important: <u>Not all growth profits the poor</u>. Inequality matters. At broadband cable to a country or to a city does not necessarily mean that its inhabitants will get out of poverty. At the household level, ICTs can become a source of inequality.

- <u>A very specific strategy is needed for attacking poverty directly and for the achievement of the MDGs.</u>

In search of a strategy, we need to start with a better understanding of poverty

- In order to develop a coherent strategy how to make use of ICTs as a tool for poverty reduction, we need a better understanding of poverty. Technology comes second. This sounds simplistic, but it is crucial.

- <u>Poverty is more than just income poverty.</u> In 2000, the World Bank initiated a very large participatory research study called "Voices of the poor". For this study, WB staff interviewed 60'000 poor women and men from 60 countries. The study concluded that poverty is more than inadequate income, it is also vulnerability, a lack of opportunities, and a lack of voice, power and representation. With this multi-dimensional view of poverty comes greater complexity in poverty reduction strategies, because more factors - such as social and cultural forces – need to be taken into account.

- The Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001 "Attacking poverty" – which was based on the "Voices of the Poor" Report - therefore proposes to deal with this complexity through the creation of enhanced opportunities, through empowerment of poor people at all levels and through enhanced security. Let us start with empowerment first:

Empowerment (1)

- A very quick overview shows that ICTs can be a powerful tool for empowerment of poor people. The World Bank defines empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan 2003).

- Empowerment is also a method for deepening democracy and participation. Empowerment strategies are often used by NGOs, but they can also be the basis of e-government projects.

- The use of ICTs by Government can help curbing corruption (e-government, m-government, e-procurement, e-customs, electronic access to information etc), which profits all citizens, but very specifically the poor, who usually cannot pay the bribes asked by middlemen and agents. Such projects also strengthen the ability of poor people to demand their rights. As an OXFAM study puts it: "Ensuring access to knowledge is integral to enabling poor people to tackle the deep inequalities of power and voice that entrench inequality across the World".

Empowerment (2)

- We can safely say that the WSIS outcome texts contain elements of an empowerment strategy, but that these elements, as a result of the negotiation process, are dispersed and at different places in the text. One clear reference is in Paragraph 14 of the Geneva Declaration: " *We are resolute* to empower the poor, particularly those living in remote, rural and marginalized urban areas, to access information and to use ICTs as a tool to support their efforts to lift themselves out of poverty". Another reference is in paragraph 11 h) of the Geneva Plan of Action: "Empower local communities, especially those in rural and undeserved areas, in ICT use and the production of useful and meaningful content for the benefit of all".

- There are two references in the WSIS outcome documents to empowerment of youth and three references to empowerment of women.

- Based on these thoughts, we can try to identify the recommendations and the Action Lines which have the strongest empowerment effect:

Empowerment (3)

- General empowerment effects are contained in Action Line C7 e-government and in Action Line C7 e-education. As we said before, e-government and m-government can created transparency and accountability of Governments, thus curbing corruption. Access to information allows poor and marginalized people and communities to fight for their rights. Literacy is empowering, and e-education programs, e-literacy and distant education campaigns etc. have an empowerment effect.

- Special empowerment effects are contained in recommendations on access, especially community access. Universal Access Funds may be used to link up remote areas and communities. Traditional media can bridge the knowledge divide and facilitate the use of cultural content (PoA para 24 g). Community radio is a very interesting empowerment tool. Giving support to media based in local communities and support projects combining the use of traditional media and new technologies for their role in facilitating the use of local languages, for documenting and preserving local heritage, including landscape and biological diversity, and as a means to reach rural and isolated and nomadic communities contains also empowerment effects (PoA para 23j).

Enhanced opportunities (1)

- Let us now look at enhanced opportunities and try to identify WSIS Action Lines and recommendations dealing specifically with enhanced opportunities:

- The general WSIS-target to link up by 2015 half of the World's population with ICTs is a window of opportunities. As we know, we have reached this target by now, with the incredible fast spread of the mobile phone. Mobile phones have an enormous impact, not only on the social side, but also on the economic side: they can create new business opportunities. It has become easy to get information about market prices by phone. People do not have to travel anymore to get market or employment information or to wait long hours to find a (daily) employment. They can be reached by phone. Phones can be used for community credit management, and also by micro-entrepreneurs who would be unable to afford an internet connection.

- There are a number of other WSIS recommendations, especially on e- agriculture (e.g. agricultural extension services that use ICTs to disseminate information on agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and food, PoA para 21 a). Improved access to Government veterinary services tools is important for poor people, as they usually cannot afford private/privatized veterinary services.

Enhanced opportunities (2)

- Indigenous knowledge networks in local language, disseminated in hardcopy and/ or on the web, can make a difference for poor people, especially in rural areas. An excellent example from India is the "Honey Bee Network" created by Sristi, a NGO from Gujarat. Their Newsletter exists in several local languages. Their searchable web database contains more than 10'000 local innovations, mostly for farmers. See http://www.sristi.org/cms/en/our_network

- Contrary to what you may think, I do not believe that the recommendations in the Action Lines on e-business and e-employment have a direct impact on poor people's lives. To do e-business or to do telework is beyond the possibilities of most poor people.

- Let us keep also in mind that creating tech-parks and Information-Mega-Corridors may stimulate GDP growth, but does not have a direct impact on poor people's lives. Many poor people never went to school, or if they went, they went to public schools, which teach in the local language. Therefore, they will not profit from the employment opportunities in the ICT industry.

Enhanced security

- Finally, it is easy to find examples for ICTs as a tool to increase human security: In e-environment, the range goes from tsunami warnings to hurricane watch, monsoon forecasts, long-term weather and crop information, information about wave heights and wind speeds for rural fishermen etc.. Another field for ICTs is disaster mitigation and recovery. Also, the use of ICTs in health (e.g. through the use of electronic health registers etc.) can contribute to more human and maternal security. Action Line C7 e-health contains several recommendations that have a direct impact on poor people's lives.

- But I would like to enlarge this picture: The multilateral donors (especially the World Bank and the IMF) have for a long time underestimated the importance of institutions like agricultural extension, health services and veterinary services. Under the "Washington consensus", World Bank loans were often conditioned to the abolishment of government-run services in favour of privatization. Poor people rely on affordable services, they are their safety network, and ICTs can be used to strengthen these government services in various ways.

- Finally, the mobile phone technology is very often a lifeline in remote locations.

Conclusion (1)

- What have we done in these few slides? We have taken the conceptual framework of the World Development Report 2000/2001 "Attacking poverty" and checked out which WSIS Action Lines and recommendations have a direct impact on poverty and reaching the MDGs. We have seen that a number of recommendations and commitments of WSIS are directly related to poverty reduction. Several ICT applications have a strong poverty reduction effect, and if they are wisely used, in cooperation with the people and in a participatory manner, the effects can be important.

- We therefore think that the CSTD 2009 could perhaps have a panel discussion and possibly a resolution on how to make use of ICTs specifically for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs, developing at the same time an adequate strategy to be used by the UN in the UNDAFs and the Common Country Assessments, and by the World Bank in the PRSPs. Many WB and UN staff members, especially at country level, are still not aware or underestimate the possibilities of ICTs for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs. There is a need to propagate these tools, and to make sure the tools are applied in a participatory manner, for empowerment, and for enhanced opportunities and security of poor people.

Conclusion (2)

- Alternatively, the CSTD could focus at its next session, on one specific technology, and if you decide to do so, one proposal could be to focus on mobile phone technology, and to try to understand how mobile phones can contribute to poverty reduction and a better and/or faster achievement of the MDGs. This would allow for an interesting panel discussion with representatives from mobile phone companies, from regulatory authorities, from international organizations and from NGOs working in the field of empowerment, creation of new opportunities and enhancement of human security.

- There is no need, in my personal view, to have every year a full-fledged resolution on WSIS implementation and follow-up. But the CSTD could of course, based on a discussion as proposed above, recommend in a draft resolution a certain number of strategies to ECOSOC on how to make best use of the mobile phone technology for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs.

Thank you very much for your attention