COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CTSD)

Sixteenth Session
Geneva, 3 to 7 June 2013

Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2012 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

Global Alliance for ICT and Development

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 16th 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.

Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)
Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society – 2012

Executive Summary:

The United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UNGAID) conducted a panel discussion at the Rio+20 conference that focused on the application of ICTs in support of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Activity Description and outcome

The key event for 2012 for, a panel discussion on "ICT a Catalyst for Sustainable Development", occurred within the framework for the Rio+20 Summit. The Panel focused on how to apply Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the challenges of environmental, social and economic sustainability in order to support the future of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Panel, organized by UNGAID in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT), examined two main themes; Exploring the potential of ICT as a major tool in addressing the current challenges of sustainable development; and identifying the key actors, including governments, NGOs and the private sector, that are implementing the ICT aspects of sustainable development, and to better understanding their approaches and challenges. The Panel provided an opportunity for participants to interact with a diverse range of constituencies on this theme and to generate new ideas, spur innovation and action and to examine ways to encourage recognition of ICT as one of the major cross-cutting drivers of sustainable development.

The panel noted that the past decade has witnessed the most dramatic growth ever seen in the use of global computing and communications. At the same time, progress in narrowing the gap between those developing countries now empowered by the fundamental right of access to networks of knowledge, and those developing countries still impoverished by the practical denial of that right, is slowing and the gap remains as stark as ever. Technology has long played a crucial part in economic and social development, and its evolution has continually raised the thresholds of possibility. In order to unleash the full potential of technology as an enabler for sustainable economic and social development throughout the developing world, a global strategy leveraging the power of technology is needed.

The importance of sustainability has been recognized in development policy since the United Nations first Summit on that theme in the early 1990s and today it is being revived with the Rio+20 Summit that aims at securing renewed political commitment. A sustainable development approach must be holistic and include its three pillars: economic, social and environmental trends, and the interactions between them. The link between ICT and sustainable development recognizes the existence of both significant opportunities and threats. On the one hand, there is optimism that the 'new economy' will bring "dematerialization", a reduction in movement of goods, and a general decoupling of economic growth and resource use, on the other hand, there

is fear that current unsustainable trends will be worsened. Without a holistic approach, the sustainable use of ICT alone will not deliver the goals of social and environmental sustainability. Common efforts from governments, civil society and businesses alike are needed

Participants in the Panel were the UNGAID Co-Chair, UN Chief Information Technology Officer (CITO), ITU, civil society organizations and private sectors companies.