

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS  
outcomes**

Submitted by

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## Opening paragraph of WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles

We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1. *To what extent, in your experience, has the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?*

The global community has done much to advance a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society in the last ten years. UNDP had had the opportunity to work closely with stakeholders around the world supporting the use of ICTs for development on an inclusive basis. Working in over 100 developing countries, UNDP has helped expand people's opportunities to create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, as well as enhance the capacity of individuals, peoples and communities to achieve their full potential. Many of these efforts are featured [here](#). New ICTs have also played a key role with the emergence of social media, the rapid advance of mobile technologies and the use of open data and open government platforms all around.

While gains here have been substantial, much remains to be done. Access to ICTs alone are not sufficient to foster inclusive participation. Strategic policies and programmes are also required. Efforts thus need to start with people's needs and priorities and then bring in ICT networks and platforms that can help meet such demands and close development gaps. People should have a voice in policy and decision-making processes that will directly affect their lives. This is a key governance issue that if addressed can lead to better development outcomes in the medium and long-run. To truly push forward the vision of WSIS we thus need to redouble our efforts to ensure that WSIS is better understood by those beyond the community of WSIS, go beyond technology access, and ensure we can effectively engage with all those stakeholders who today are still not sitting at the table.

2. *How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?*

Nowadays we live in a world that is significantly different from 10 years ago. For example, the evolution and penetration rates of ICTs, particularly of mobile phones, has been impressive ([please see ITU data](#)) and brought millions of people into the global networks. However, this does not automatically translate into gains in the development arena. If anything, the last 10 years seems to have sharpened economic inequality, conflict and insecurity, and social unrest. We need to address these issues to ensure we can have a comprehensive post2015 development agenda. And ICTS are part of the solution here by giving voice to stakeholders all around, by fostering human networks with common values and common goals, by enhancing positive interactions between people and the

public and private sectors, to name a few. All these are core centerpieces of the WSIS agenda that still need to be implemented on a wider and deeper fashion.

3. *How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a “people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society” ?*

This is perhaps where WSIS had been a truly significant force - in providing a platform for cooperation for all stakeholders to work closely together in harnessing the potential of ICTs for sustainable development. The implementation of the WSIS outcomes required the engagement of partners; no single sector or UN agency could have done any singlehandedly. UNDP’s own efforts in e-governance and access to information to date, for instance, have been focused on enabling people to have voice in key governance processes, as well as fostering and strengthened cooperation among a range of partners. But more needs to be done as many stakeholders are still not part of the overall WSIS process - and those who are can have a larger saying in determining the future of the information society.

4. *What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a “people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society”?*

For UNDP, one of the main challenges in implementing WSIS outcomes is ensuring coherence of efforts across the UN system, with development practitioners and partners and stakeholders on the ground. Another key challenge is to develop better links and interconnections between WSIS and global development agendas such as the MDGs and the upcoming SDGs. At least for developing countries the emergence and consolidation of the information society is not feasible if development gaps are not also addressed simultaneously.

5. *How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?*

Cooperation and collaboration across the UN system had been addressed by the efforts of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), and these efforts need more support. In terms of other partners and stakeholders, this is exactly where the WSIS community can maximize its value by being a platform where partners can be in step with each other and collaborate. But ownership of this platformed needs to be spread out and decentralized to ensure broader cooperation and collaboration. The post2015 process have proven to be an open process where all stakeholders have been able to participate and provide inputs. The UN own [MyWorld](#) survey has attracted almost 4 million people, 48% of them women. Such input is now being brought into the formal discussions on the new SDGs.

6. *What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?*

Technology is advancing at a fast pace, much faster than the achievement of critical development goals. Notable in the last 10 years are: social media and social networks, mobile technologies, open data, big data and open government and crowdsourcing with all its children. From a developing country point of view, the rapid diffusion of mobiles technologies, unprecedented in history, can be a game changer there as long as we can link it to policy and programmes that foster development outcomes. Although most of it is still based on access, we are now seeing the emergence of

platforms that provide with new opportunities to be part of development processes at the local level. This same growth has also led to the emergence of social innovators who are in fact deploying apps that address local needs. For some observers, all these rapid changes imply that the WSIS action plan needs to be revisited to capture these changes and present the new opportunities.

*7. What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?*

One key priority for stakeholders is to remain focused on improving people's lives by harnessing the potential of ICTs within the framework of the WSIS outcomes. The rapid diffusion of new ICTs has brought forward new opportunities to foster public service delivery and access to public information, enhance the transparency and accountability of public institutions and private organizations, and empower stakeholders to have louder voices in key decision-making processes. For this to actually happen however, stakeholders should also engage with policy makers, UN agencies, donors, and national governments to ensure ICTs are seen as part of the solution to many development problems -without forgetting that ICTs are not a panacea.

*8. What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post2015 development agenda?*

[UNGIS' Joint Statement on the Post2015 Development Agenda](#) describes the role that ICTs play in the implementation of the agenda. This role is not only important but necessary to effectively address the complex and constant shifting development challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Nevertheless, while ICTs should be part and parcel of the new development agenda, they should also not be seen as a goal on their own. Instead, their transformational potential should be highlighted.

*9. Other comments*

UNDP looks forward to working more closely with all partners and stakeholders to advance the goal and vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. UNDP is always eager to listen and act upon the inputs provided by stakeholders from all sectors and countries who are willing to contribute to the development of inclusive, sustainable and peaceful information society.