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

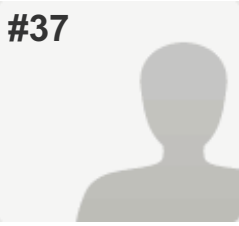**MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND**

ON BEHALF OF THE FINNISH WSIS-MULTISTAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY

#37

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Q6:	**Which stakeholder category do you belong to?**	Other (please specify) Finnish WSIS-multistakeholder community

Q7: **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?**

In our view, it is impossible to say how far we have come in terms of reaching the overall vision of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, but certainly progress has been made. In 2005, "information society" was still seen as something aspirational, clouded in the future and different from the real "society".

However, we regard that "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" describes a process rather than a well-defined target. As the introduction to the action plan (A) states: "The Information Society is an evolving concept that has reached different levels across the world, reflecting the different stages of development. Technological and other change is rapidly transforming the environment in which the Information Society is developed. "

Today, our society is an information society. ICT has permeated every aspect of life and activity of a vast majority of mankind. Even regions, where the citizens still make relatively weak use of ICTs (e.g. in terms of Internet usage), are on a macro level completely integrated into a world polity and economy dependent on ICT. Thus the information society we speak of today is not the same one that was discussed during the WSIS negotiations in 2003 and 2005.

Whether the information society in 2015 is more people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented than in 2005 is another matter. In general, the answer is yes. However, this is to a large extent due to the use made of the development of ICT and not primarily due to the WSIS principles.

The past ten years have also shown the importance of political decisions of whether and how to use the fruits of technology towards furthering the WSIS objectives. Positive examples show how enlightened policies have helped to redeem the promise of the Article 1 of the Geneva Declaration of a 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 (...)". In other regions, development has unfortunately not been alike as policies harmful to the WSIS principles, such as opposing the freedom of the Internet, have been adopted.

Of all the outcomes of the WSIS, we find the adoption of the multistakeholder model, its sustained use and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to have been the most useful and successful means in advancing the goals of people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

Q8: **How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?**

Looking at the implementation of action lines (C1-C11), the picture of how we have progressed is a mixed one. To begin with, the entire topology of action lines reflects the thinking way back in 2003, when they were negotiated during the first WSIS phase. There has been enormous development in some sectors (e.g., infrastructure, access to information and knowledge, capacity building and various "e-applications"). Furthermore, there have been transformative developments completely unforeseen 10-12 years ago. And finally there are sectors, where in spite of best efforts, development has been slow or even negative. Shattering blows to the confidence in the use of ICTs have been experienced, and the ethical dimensions of an ICT-enabled society have proven to be more problematic today than back when the WSIS principles were agreed.

Technical conditions to facilitate and use all world languages were largely put in place by ICANN by enabling the use of non-ASCII scripts in the top level names of the DNS.

The Digital Solidarity Agenda of the Geneva Declaration has progressed. In the case of Finland, the role of information society, ICT and innovation in the context of our ODA spending have risen to be a significant component of our development policy. Finland has contributed to WSIS Follow-up through financial support to the IGF and the CSTD.

A key question of the WSIS+10 review should be, what has been the role and relevance of the elaborate implementation framework set up in a rather heated atmosphere of the final negotiations before the Tunis Summit to what developments have actually taken place over the last decade. Furthermore, to what extent were the intergovernmental organizations on the "indicative and non-exhaustive list of facilitators/moderators for the action lines" in the Annex 1 actually able to influence the developments in their allotted fiefs, remains a pertinent question.

The issue of Internet Governance was treated separately from the action lines of the Tunis Agenda. The disputes about what was actually agreed upon in Tunis have continued for ten years. Since there is no consensus on what the outcome was, there cannot be a consensus on whether and how it has been implemented.

Finally in our view, the real success story of WSIS has been the implementation of what we - along with a global majority of all stakeholders - think the outcome on internet governance was, namely internet governance by the multistakeholder model. Therefore we regard that the WSIS goal of internet governance with full involvement of governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations is near its attainment, as has been witnessed in the yearly Internet Governance Forum that has been organized true to the multistakeholder model as well as by the outcome of NETmundial held in April 2014, which further highlighted the importance of the multistakeholder model.

On national level, the Finnish Government facilitates a multistakeholder WSIS-follow-up group. The group organizes a yearly multistakeholder forum, the Finnish Internet Forum, which is the Finnish national IGF, Internet Governance Forum, which is organized by and open to all stakeholders.

Q9: **How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**

As has been described in the previous answers, the results achieved in developing the global information society cannot in general be attributed to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes alone.

There has been significant progress on the 10 connectivity-related objectives outlined in section B of the action plan, but these in themselves do not tell us much about the qualitative aspect of information society development, or progress towards a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society". Access to technology as such does not mean it can be meaningfully used. For instance, access might be restricted, controlled or prohibitively expensive.

There has been progress on all action lines (C1-C11), but it is impossible to evaluate how far in each of them we have come. Clearly there are areas where progress has been more rapid and others where we are lagging behind. One problem is the vagueness of many of the objectives or subobjectives in the action plan. For instance in C3 "Access to information and knowledge", we can say that all of the a. to j. have to some extent been reached, but access to information and knowledge still remains a key problem in the developing world.

Q10: **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"?**

We see that different kinds of challenges remain. Major challenges to the emergence of people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society are posed by governments that restrict the openness of the Internet and limit their citizens' use of it, thereby suppressing their right to freedom of expression. In general, we consider the role of governments to have been too dominant, while the creation of an enabling environment for market-based approaches, private sector investment and innovation has received too little attention.

Another challenge is posed by issues related to the lack of trust on the Internet. The growing capacity for information gathering and processing increases the likelihood of misuse of the information by different actors, including businesses, political movements, criminals and even governments. The more ICT-enabled a society is, the more it depends on trust. The loss of digital trust and confidence in using ICTs is one of the biggest challenges to making the society a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. Thus, all actors should work on measures building trust through multistakeholder dialogue.

Regarding technological challenges, the type of internet access available is a key concern. Rather than fixed internet access with limited bandwidth, broadband and mobile access is needed. Mobile connections now form the most important channel for getting on-line for an increasing number of people.

Q11: **How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?**

We believe that the most efficient way of convincing decision-makers around the world of the importance of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society, is to develop Internet governance based on multistakeholder approach. In the past ten years this model has proven efficient in furthering the agenda of the information society while also enabling innovation.

Furthermore, in the future even more participatory processes and bottom-up, citizen-centric approaches for information society development are needed. In addition, new investments should be made in capacity-building and education and thereby building capacity to benefit from new technology. Societies should also pay more attention to encouraging local innovation and entrepreneurship.

Q12: 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?

If in 2005 ICT and the Internet were still considered by some as "nice to have", now they are definitely "must haves", thereby not optional extras but the basic, critical and indispensable operating system for the mankind. Even more important than the growth of Internet users in numbers, is the increased pervasiveness of ICT in our lives.

The Tunis outcome documents do not mention search engines or user-generated contents, cloud services, let alone social media. On the application level, these innovations have certainly meant the biggest change for the end-users. From a read-only environment, the Internet developed into a read-and-write environment and now, for more and more people, a live-in environment, where a growing share of one's social life takes place. Another key trend has been the growing importance of mobile connections.

Accordingly, the compartmentalization of ICT/Information Society issues from 2003 and 2005 seems outdated. Issues have blended into each other and into completely new challenges or issues, and the various "e-applications" have long since lost their prefixes, becoming mainstream in their fields from government to commerce and to science.

Q13: What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?

Stakeholders should consider WSIS as a snapshot and product of its time. Thus its outcomes – on issues that were known at that time – are in themselves quite valid on a general level, but their implementation today and in the future should take into account the big change that has happened.

NETmundial produced an outcome document on Internet principles that can be read as a multi-stakeholder update to the WSIS documents. Some of the pertinent and controversial points in them were reinterpreted in the light of accumulated experience, and issues not even on a distant horizon in 2005 were treated in the spirit of WSIS principles. NETmundial served a purpose at the time it was organized and provided the multistakeholder community with a needed venue for conversation. However, it is our view that there are sufficient processes already in place to deal with future challenges and we should restrain from creating new ones.

Q14: What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?

Taking into account the development of the past decade, we are convinced that information and communications should play a major role in implementing the post 2015 development agenda.

Furthermore, it should be ensured that ICTs are mainstreamed and play a key role as part of overall development strategies in improving governance, enabling sustainable economic growth, promoting human rights and democracy, increasing transparency and preventing corruption, and thus putting development on a sound footing. Ability to innovate and take advantage of new technology in new and novel ways is more and more important, and should be prioritized.

Q15: Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.

Respondent skipped this question

Q16: We would also welcome any documents, reports, etc. that you can forward which you think will provide useful evidence for the review. Please send these to cstd-wsis10@unctad.org. It would be helpful if you could list these in this box, together with any URL which enables access to them on the World Wide Web.

Respondent skipped this question