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Geneva, 14–16 November 2006

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT MEETING ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS
TO SERVICES**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
from 14 to 16 November 2006

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Chapter I

CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY

1. The Expert Meeting on Universal Access to Services was held in Geneva from 14 to 16 November 2006. Experts put forward their views on how Governments of developed and developing countries could play an active role, at national and international levels, including multilateral trade negotiations, to ensure that universal access to essential services is achieved. The participants commended the secretariat for its excellent background document TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/2 and the innovative and holistic approach of the Meeting, bringing together regulators, policy makers, civil society and trade negotiators. While addressing universal access on a cross-cutting basis, specific sessions of the Meeting focused on water and sanitation, health, education and telecommunications. The following summary reflects the richness of the views expressed and suggestions made.

A. Introduction

2. The economic dimension of services has captured the attention of Governments, civil society and the private sector, who respectively seek to generate developmental and commercial gains from the growth of services sectors. The Meeting highlighted a different dimension of services, i.e. the social and human dimension of essential services, which needs to be put at the centre of the debate. Beyond pure economic efficiency considerations, access to essential services by the population at large should be approached from the poverty point of view and as a human rights issue, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The importance of ensuring universal access not only for subsistence purposes, but also for the attainment of wider human and national development goals, including but not limited to the MDGs, was recognized by many of the participants. Access to essential services will also be crucial for reducing economic gaps between countries and between different segments of the population, and mitigating poverty. Given the close interrelationship between essential services (e.g. health and education; water and health), many participants suggested that a holistic approach towards essential services sectors is needed. Another challenge is to achieve an adequate balance between equity and efficiency, a core concern that needs to be addressed already in the design of universal access (UA) policies.

3. There is no universal definition determining which services should be considered essential or basic services. In general, such services will serve to promote economic and social development and contribute to social solidarity and nation building. Even though different services were highlighted as being basic or essential (water and sanitation, waste disposal, energy, health, education, communications, finance and transportation, among others), there was consensus that the definition of which services are considered essential is fundamentally a societal choice, which will depend on each country's domestic characteristics and perceived needs. "Essential service" has to be understood as a dynamic concept that needs to be revised and adjusted to changing technologies and national realities. The characteristic of essential services as a merit good¹ justifies the need for state

¹ In the case of merit goods, the socially desirable level of services supply is not offered because of, among other reasons, profit considerations, public-good characteristics and the potential for free riding. Merit goods/services are intrinsically desirable or socially valuable, with citizens being entitled to such goods and services, irrespective of whether they can afford them and of actual desires and preference.

intervention to assure their adequate provision and also to assure access by the population. Not all basic services share the same characteristics, constraints and challenges. For example, provision of water and sanitation services cannot always be organized effectively and efficiently at the national level and could be regulated locally. However, energy and other network-based services could necessitate regulation at the national level.

4. The distinction between universal service and universal access was discussed. While the first refers to services provided to each person or household individually, the latter refers to making the service accessible to everybody, whether through individual or collective access. Hence, developing countries usually aim at ensuring universal access rather than universal services. With respect to universal access, there might be different definitions depending on policy goals and sectors. The key issues that need to be addressed when considering essential services are: availability, accessibility, affordability and adaptability/appropriateness. However, equity and efficiency need to be factored in, since selective implementation of access could result in imbalances between communities and lack of service to the poor. The focus should be on increasing quantity and access while maintaining adequate quality, adapted to local conditions.

B. The relationship between access to essential services and poverty

5. The significant, strong and manifested interrelationship between poverty and access to essential services was stressed by the participants. Access is mainly a distributional issue. Lack of access to essential services in most instances, as is clear in the case of access to water for example, is basically the result of the uneven distribution of income and resources. The gap between countries and between the well-off and the poor at the national level in terms of access to essential services has been widening, and ironically the poor in some cases are paying relatively more for essential services such as water. This gap has been reducing in some sectors such as telecommunications, but in overall terms it has been growing, mirroring the inequality gap. In general, policies so far have not delivered desired results in terms of ensuring UA. Achieving access to universal services requires as a necessary condition a parallel effort to address poverty and income distribution issues at the national level. It is not possible to get out of poverty without access to essential services, while failing to raise income levels undermines access to essential services, as has emerged in the case of Malawi in the area of education. On the other hand, the Cuban experience with health and education services has demonstrated that policy measures aimed at reducing poverty are the most effective in improving access to universal services.

C. The role of the state and the public sector

6. The role that the state has to play in assuring UA to essential services was an issue that generated strong consensus among participants, in particular in light of human rights and public good considerations. The state is responsible for assuring universal access to essential services through direct provision of services or through implementation of different schemes allowing participation of the private sector, communities or not-for-profit initiatives in providing the services. In essence, the state's role is to respect, protect and facilitate universal access to essential services. In both scenarios, government regulation for the provision of UA-related services is central. A number of cross-cutting issues need to be addressed when seeking to achieve universal access. These include equity and efficiency considerations; flexibility and policy space for Governments where there is a need to adjust goals to economic, social and technological development requirements; developing closely inter-related services; and how to manage the targeting of specific measures at marginalized and

poor segments of the population, particularly in the case of subsidies. There is no “one-size-fits-all” or “model” approach to assuring universal access to essential services, and the transfer of best practices from one country to another might not be possible at all. Policy choices are closely related and dependent on the institutional and regulatory capacities available at the national and subnational levels. Mechanisms to ensure universal access have to be compatible with institutional, financial, technological and human resource capacities that can be allocated to the attainment of these objectives.

D. Ensuring universal access

7. In order to assure UA, the state may use different instruments. The economic characteristics of markets determine to a large extent the nature of the appropriate response. In some sectors, for example water, sanitation, health and education, the direct provision of these services by public entities is preponderant, in both developed and developing countries. However, the trend in other essential services (e.g. telecommunications) is to rely increasingly on private and community-based service providers. Appropriate regulations and institutions are central for achieving progress in the provision of essential services.

8. Universal access objectives need to reflect national development objectives and be forward-looking. For example, in the education sector, limiting universal access objectives to primary schooling would deprive developing countries of the possibility of generating the ability for their populations to participate more effectively in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Adopting timetables for universal access objectives would help in providing prompt and rapid improvement in basic living conditions of the poor. For example, regulations need to carefully specify minimum timeframes for cost recovery for infrastructure improvements and expansions. The experience of Argentina is a good example in this respect; regulations allowed some utilities to recover new infrastructure outlays over a two-year period, resulting in a sharp increase in user fees. Also, rapid and massive improvement of access to essential services for the whole of the population should be the focus of universal access policies. While ambitious and aggressive goals may be desirable, policymakers need to refrain from designing too perfect a model for universal access, as this would be costly to develop and difficult to realize. Some suggested focusing on rapid implementation rather than perfect implementation. Fine-tuning policies to optimize results should be a long-term effort and ensure sustainability of universal access. Universal access needs to be designed and applied using nationally agreed principles for public services to ensure that broad-based economic and social development goals are advanced at the national level, including by local actors and small providers/operators.

9. Some participants highlighted the fact that the short-term approach advocated by international financial institutions has induced choices in favour of market-based solutions in the provision of essential services, premised on expectations of a quicker and more efficient response. Public provision of the services could take longer to yield results, but over time would be more sustainable and equitable. Privatization and public/private partnerships (PPPs) have been used as instruments for improving access to essential services. In this case, striking a balance between the interests of consumers and investors is crucial. The private sector has many ways of putting pressure on States with weak institutional structures, but this is not the case with the poor and marginalized when trying to ensure that UA policies are maintained by Governments. Translating UA policies into laws and regulations provides civil society with a tool for putting pressure on the Government. Sequencing is also a very important issue, as it is necessary to have proper regulatory and institutional frameworks in place before

liberalization takes place. The need to have functioning competition policies, independent regulators, transparency, and effective targeting and monitoring was stressed.

1. Privatization and the role of private providers

10. Privatization is seen by some developing country Governments as a tool for facilitating universal access to essential services. Private operators can contribute to UA in the services sectors by providing and expanding the availability of services. The contribution of the private sector derives from its ability to provide the capital investment, specialized skills, knowledge and technology. To materialize the contribution of the private sector, political will, the backing of Governments and strict monitoring are required.

11. In the late 1990s and 1990s, many expected that privatization of public utilities would stimulate competition and attract private investment, and that market forces themselves could generate pro-poor results. However, empirical evidence on the benefits of moving from public to private provision of services is mixed. In some cases, to achieve high levels of profitability, the private sector has engaged in practices such as risk avoidance, cherry picking and cartel pricing. Such behaviour has often precluded private operators from fully contributing to the achievement of UA objectives in developing countries. On the other hand, lack of adequate policies and regulatory, institutional and legal frameworks, compounded by problems of corruption and lack of transparency, have also negatively affected the attainment of expected results in some instances. One central challenge is how to manage the relationship between commercial objectives of private operators on the one hand and equity and access preoccupations of Governments on the other. Adequate regulations, institutional structures and incentive systems are necessary to match the objectives of the private sector with those of the society as a whole.

12. Privatization has seen resistance in both developing and developed countries, mainly from public utility workers, trade unions and social movements. The overwhelming mistrust of the private sector in the area of universal service provision has often discouraged Governments from introducing privatization. The EU serves as an example where the general perception of the public tended to be against the private exploitation of national resources. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom's experience with privatization and France's experiences with private sector engagement in water distribution seem to be successful.

13. For privatization to succeed, it is important to define universal access objectives clearly at the outset of the privatization process, ideally in the planning process and well before privatization takes place. Furthermore, robust regulatory frameworks need to be put in place and universal access objectives set according to national development objectives. Merely establishing national UA policies is not sufficient. These policies need to be translated appropriately all the way down to local levels of government. It is imperative for national authorities to ensure consultation, regulation, monitoring and related supervisory activities. Where these conditions are met, public authorities can look at private sector operators as powerful tools for the achievement of UA policies. The experience of the EU in developing guiding principles for the privatization of basic services has been a positive one. It has achieved public objectives within competitive markets, managed to ensure local availability and social cohesion, and maintained high levels of quality, security, safety and affordability.

2. Public/private partnerships

14. The past performance of public/private partnerships (PPPs) through regulated market-based approaches in the water, education and energy sectors has delivered mixed results in terms of meeting UA objectives. This is explained in part by regulatory shortcomings and commercial barriers that negatively affected the performance of PPPs in achieving access, availability and affordability objectives for basic services for the poor.

15. To ensure the success of PPPs, carefully designed contracts need to be put in place. Authorities engage with the private sector through contracts, which requires the establishment of certain criteria and levels of delivery to be monitored and enforced under these contracts. This leads not only to a better understanding but also to better implementation of the terms of the contract. Output-based mechanisms can be used successfully. The complexity of negotiating contracts concerning essential services emerged in the discussions, highlighted by a number of contracts in distress involving public utilities.

E. Cross-cutting issues in ensuring universal access

1. Regulatory reform

16. The role of regulation in ensuring UA to services is supported by different considerations, such as the need to address market failures, amongst which information asymmetry, monopolies (including natural monopolies) and externalities. Appropriate sequencing, pacing and content of reforms are key for successful UA policies. UA policies can take many forms, ranging from public (or publicly financed) provision of UA-related services to private (or privately financed) provision and private-sector participation (e.g. through contracting out) to universal service obligations (USOs) or different forms of subsidies. All of them pose challenges and offer opportunities, and it is for each Government to define the best policy mix suited to its particular needs.

17. Privatization/private sector participation and liberalization can offer useful tools to enhance UA, particularly in situations where government financing is scarce. In the absence of effective regulation and competitive markets, however, they can also compromise UA goals, pointing to the need to identify an appropriate policy-mix of liberalization and regulation. Importantly, regulatory and institutional frameworks need to be developed in line with the social and economic particularities of the country and the services sector in question (including country-specific market characteristics and institutional development).

18. This in turn, will entail a process of trial and error, with the regulatory changes requiring a certain degree of regulatory and policy flexibility, an issue further stressed by the absence of a single model for implementing regulatory reform. Rules and regulations aimed at enhancing UA objectives can also bring about unintended – and unexpected – side effects. In South Africa, for example, a USO proved successful in increasing connections for phone lines, but subsequently failed to ensure sustainability of such connections over time. Once connected, consumers could not afford the rates, prompting the operator to disconnect those who had just been offered connections.

19. Accordingly, adequate attention has to be paid to the proper implementation of regulatory approaches. Another example where the effectiveness of government support programmes has been questioned relates to subsidies. Sometimes programmes fail to assist the intended beneficiaries: at times, poor segments of the population pay up to 10 times more for water, giving rise to calls to enhance the proper targeting of government policies.

20. The need for complementary policies is also obvious in the education sector. Free primary education was recognized as the most important single policy measure having a dramatic impact on enrolments. But it also poses significant challenges. In Malawi, for example, the rapid increase in enrolment (by over 50 per cent) that followed the abolition of user fees also generated pressures on infrastructure and human resource capacities. Lack of classrooms and teachers negatively affected the quality of education (e.g. by raising student-to-teacher ratios). Complementary policies needed include investment in infrastructure and human resource development, both of which, in turn, require financing, which is not always available in developing countries. Alternatively, limitations in resources may require trade-offs between access and quality objectives, at least in the short run. In sum, UA policies might require building and strengthening of institutional frameworks and implementing a series of complementary policies.

21. In developing countries, the informal sector plays an important role in the provision of some UA-related services, with particular impact on the poor. This poses a challenge to regulators, among other things because of lack of human resources, data and institutions to integrate the informal sector effectively into the regulatory framework for enhancing UA.

2. Multi-stakeholder approach

22. Proper involvement of all stakeholders can be crucial for achieving UA. All stakeholders and civil society should be involved, including at the local level. Consulting local populations that benefit from UA policies is central to ensuring ownership and sustainability (financial, environmental and social) of UA policies and more broadly enhancing solidarity in the design and implementation of pro-poor policies. Failure to consult could result in undermining responses to the real needs. Involving populations in consultations and needs assessments, in turn, can result in better projects and successful implementation, based on a holistic and balanced approach to policy making. This will include several elements, one of which is transparent and effective governance, including through decentralization and recognition of the role of local authorities. It will be complemented by policies ensuring that beneficiary groups are consulted and can participate effectively in planning, decision-making and implementation of policies. Enabling institutional frameworks, as well as effective monitoring, are important throughout the process. It is hoped that such holistic, multi-stakeholder approaches can lead to long-term and sustainable approaches to UA, with affordable prices and sustainable financing. Partnerships play an important role in that context. They can range from public/private to public/public and other community-based forms of cooperation.

3. Access to financing

23. Access to financing was found to be a key element in ensuring UA to essential services. Government expenditures need to retain their key role in a number of UA-related service segments (e.g. being the principal financing mechanism in primary education services). However, the role of government finance has progressively declined in most countries during the past decade. Choosing among financing options depends on national conditions and the particular services sector under consideration. The role of bonds in financing infrastructure development also needs to be also recognized. Building the financial capacity of public services, including through fiscal mechanisms, in an atmosphere of greater transparency and broader participation would contribute to the attainment of UA policies. Government-raised financing is less costly than reliance on private sector financing. In many

instances, when privatization has not produced clear efficiency and productivity results, adequate financial mechanisms have often been lacking

4. Subsidies

24. The provision of essential services necessarily entails a cost, and the fact that the cost has to be borne by somebody was a recurrent theme in the discussions during the Meeting. The issue of who should bear the cost of providing services to those segments of the population that cannot afford to pay fees covering the full costs constitutes a critical aspect of UA policies. Improving access to essential services for disadvantaged groups necessarily requires some type of subsidization, with due consideration for WTO rules and regulations. The Meeting addressed a number of alternatives, for example, budgetary financing, as in the case of free primary education, where the cost is assumed by society as a whole by allocating tax revenues for the purpose. Another alternative is provided by solidarity approaches, through which the contribution by a segment of the population to a system allows provision of services to other segments whose contribution does not necessarily cover the full costs of the services rendered. This is the case, for example, in health services provided through social security systems. Another alternative, used in telecom and water sectors for example, is cross-subsidization by means of differentiated prices, through which well-off sectors of society paying higher fees in order to finance the provision of services to other segments of the population.

25. There are a number of issues to be addressed when defining a subsidy policy for improving access to essential services. Should subsidies be granted to the service supplier or directly to the households that need them? An example of subsidies granted to the operator can be found in the case of universal service funds (USFs) in the telecommunications industry. While this approach has been successful in many cases, it also poses significant challenges and risks. For example, it requires efficient targeting to avoid subsidy leakages that end up benefiting the well-off, a problem reported in the Meeting. Another problem encountered when subsidizing some services like water supply through managed fees is that intervention ends up benefiting only those that already have access to the service and does not contribute to improving access for those that are excluded from the network. Efficient management of subsidy mechanisms is a core factor in ensuring that state intervention will indeed contribute to UA to essential services.

5. Competition-related issues

26. Competition-related issues arise regarding both the public and private provision of services. While some point to the importance of competition in ensuring efficient provision of services, others point to the fact that in reality some services sectors are prone to oligopolistic market structures. In that context, reference was made to the US experience with health insurance services. Private sector participation raises competition challenges on at least two fronts. First, there is the issue of achieving optimal unbundling of previously state-run utilities with a view to separating potentially competitive operations from natural monopoly elements and preventing market-power from being transferred to privatized entities. This may be difficult for developing countries if they are under pressure to dispose of the utility. Second, competition-related challenges arise in a post-liberalization setting. These are mainly related to the abuse of dominant position and the control of a public network that is exclusively or predominantly provided by a single provider. Other challenges related to the competitive sale of state utilities and the award of concessions, both of which require transparency in tendering and bidding processes. Further, public utilities and affiliates operate

in a mixed world of regulated and unregulated markets. Again, this could potentially create incentives for abuse.

27. In relation to the electricity and natural gas industry, introducing competition requires restructuring vertically integrated monopolies, privatizing production units, creating independent energy regulators, unbundling ownership and operation of transmission and distribution networks, and unbundling distribution transport from retail to final customers (e.g. in the case of electricity and natural gas). Competition issues also arise in many other contexts, e.g. with respect to mergers and acquisitions or long-term and capacity reservation contracts. Importantly, the form and nature of competition-related questions may differ according to the different stages of regulatory change (e.g. different phases to be undergone when transforming market structures from public monopolistic to private competitive ones).

6. The role of knowledge and technology

28. Participants highlighted the importance of harnessing technology and knowledge as key contributors to expanding UA to services. Knowledge is key to informed action and sustainable change, highlighting the crucial importance of building human capital through training and “hands on” experience. Attention was also drawn to the role of transfer of technology. For sustainable results, technology has to be transferred through longer-term relationships, allowing knowledge to be adapted to local conditions. Public/public partnerships and South-South cooperation can play an important role in this context. Public/private partnerships also have experience in knowledge and capacity transfer. IFIs and the donor community have a delicate role to play in facilitating change and transfer of technology and producing greater efforts to engage meaningfully in cross-pollination between own and locally-held knowledge.

F. Lessons learned in specific sectors of essential services

29. Country experiences were used to illustrate the variety of approaches towards achieving UA objectives, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of UA public policies, with reference to the role of the public sector, privatization and other forms of private sector participation. The discussion and review of country experiences helped identify best practices and lessons learned. While success stories emphasized the importance of good policies at the national, local and firm levels, other examples flagged the significance of remedial actions by the Government. Generally, government and public sector actions are necessary, since public provision of services can be justified on equity and efficiency grounds, as well as by the potential for market failures and the natural-monopoly nature of some services (e.g. water).

1. Universal Access to Water

30. The lack of universal access to water highlights inequalities between both regions and countries, with about 1.1 billion and 2.6 billion people lacking access to water and sanitation respectively. This continues to undermine the realization of human potential. The water divide prevalent in the world today creates inequality and injustice whereby only 20 per cent of the population has access to a reliable water system. Access to water is a basic human right. Accordingly, Governments report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on their actions in favour of ensuring sufficient, safe, regular and equitable access to water with a view to fulfilling their treaty obligations. Key indicators are availability, quality and accessibility of water. Proper implementation of the right to water requires: analysing the

content of this right; identifying the public authority responsible for implementing and monitoring the right; and making the right real for every individual. Local governments and authorities have an important role to play in realizing the right to water, and so does international assistance and cooperation, including South-South cooperation. The private sector could also be seen as an actor in the implementation of policies.

31. The privatization of the East Zone of Manila, Philippines, shows possible benefits of private sector participation. With the objectives of raising the reliability and quality of the water supply, reducing prices for consumers and ensuring the long-term sustainability of water services, the two main challenges to overcome were leakages (63 per cent of non-revenue water) and over-staffing (the public company employed 9.8 persons per 1,000 connections, compared to an average of less than 3 per 1,000 connections for efficient firms). Among other things, the success of privatization was considered to be largely due to successful management, which focused on both business and social and environmental goals. Particular emphasis was placed on building human resources, including through staff incentive programmes and training programmes (also to ensure sustainability of capacity building), involving staff in decision-making, and ensuring a positive, cross-cultural working environment. Moreover, the company's board of trustees established a regulatory office to monitor the operation of the company, with several government entities collaborating. All these measures were translated into twenty-four-hour water supply access and the extension of the customer base coverage from 26 to 97 per cent.

32. Bolivia has experienced several serious conflicts over water. The Government withdrew some concessions granted earlier and adopted a new approach that gave priority to human consumption, water uses for agriculture and food security. Noting that the key challenges are not only technical but also social, the new approach adopted the following basic principles: water supply should not be considered a lucrative, money-making business; the process of privatization should not continue in the water sector; income generated in the water sector should be reinvested in the service; full cost recovery is not always possible, or necessary; and there should be participation of the people (supported by government technical assistance and financing) in decision-making and management. Institutional reform also took place, and a new ministry for water was set up. National water plans have been established, followed by drafting of specific laws and regulations, the setting-up of a centralized coordinating authority and an independent regulator, and development of an investment plan for the sector.

33. The water sector is highly capital-intensive and generally under-funded. With the need for resources to maintain existing infrastructure and to expand the network, financing through private participation is important. For local firms, for example, it is important to have access to long-term loans at affordable rates. High debts – including those arising from much needed infrastructure investments – can create challenges for companies' operations. In the context of concessions, the private sector suggested that the consumer's bill should remain the first, primary and long-term source of financing. At the same time, the point was made that full cost recovery is too rigid an objective, and attention was given to other concepts, including sustainable cost recovery. When the Government is taking the lead role in supplying water, a mixture of government loans and direct funding can be used. In the case of subsidization (of either producers or consumers), targeting of firms/population groups is crucial, with proper data and experience with different mechanisms again being important. The merits of public finance and government borrowing should not be underestimated because of their lower costs and because they make it possible to maximize reinvestment in

the service. There is, therefore, considerable and untapped potential in terms of public water operators. While international financial institutions have played an important role in many countries, the role of donors is also quite a delicate one.

34. Concession contracts were highlighted as a key element for the success of private sector participation. In light of the high number of concessions that had to be renegotiated, the negotiations between government and firms on the compensation for the amount initially invested by the company were noted as central. Suggestions included expanding the knowledge base and data forming the basis of concession contracts and enhancing government officials' capacity to successfully negotiate such contracts. Involving civil society and building trust and understanding among the actors involved is also important.

35. Emphasis was also given to public/public partnerships and to small-scale water service providers. The latter are particularly prevalent in countries with low coverage levels. They are important players in water and sanitation services (approximately 10,000 in 49 countries), providing water services in remote areas; they are often the only sustainable players in some countries, and fill the gaps when water services are interrupted or not available in certain areas. Recognizing the role of these firms and supporting them – within a proper regulatory framework – is one means of contributing to UA to water services. The relevance of traditional means of supplying water was also noted: pipe-run water is not the only option for ensuring access to safe water. However, it was also pointed out that the informal sector provides services to the poor and marginalized at a price higher than that charged by the formal public and private sector.

36. Participants noted the importance of environmental considerations, as well as challenges arising for countries with scarce water resources.

37. Private firms should focus first on what their human resources can bring them before turning to major capital expenditures. Firms should also seek to ensure the local adaptation of foreign partners' technology.

2. Education services

38. Universal access to primary education for all school-age children has been a common goal in every country and has been recognized as a human right in Article XXVI of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The experience of India has shown that significant achievements are possible in assuring access to primary education. The country is very close to providing universal primary education. However, it was a long process confronting many hurdles, with mixed outcomes. The role of the state as a service provider has been and still is preponderant, with 90 per cent of enrolment in primary education in state schools. However, there has been an increase in the participation of private providers, particularly in upper primary and secondary education. The Indian experience demonstrates the interdependence between level of income and access to essential services. Results have been uneven depending on rural and urban settings, even though progress has been made in all cases. The balance needs to be maintained between access and quality of service: while access has improved, in some cases this might have been at the expense of quality. Complementary policies (including investment in infrastructure and human development) are frequently needed in this context. Complementary policies can also help to turn brain drain into brain gain and brain circulation.

39. In Cuba, extensive efforts have been made to provide local access not only to primary schools but also to universities. Such efforts have gone far in eliminating the rural/urban divide and have contributed to high national levels of enrolment, literacy and life expectancy. In Cuba, great emphasis is placed on adapting educational services to different locations within the country and serving location-specific social requirements.

40. The impact of user fees in the education sector was illustrated by the case of Malawi. In Malawi, prior to the 1990s, studies showed that less than half of eligible children were enrolled in school. It was considered that this was due to lack of money to pay for school fees, school materials and uniforms, as well as the opportunity cost of sending children to school (foregone revenue). School fees remained relatively stable between 1975 and 1982. In 1982, the fees were increased, leading to a further decline in enrolment. In the 1990s, the Government decided to abolish user fees for primary education. In a first stage, parents were asked to pay book fees and contribute to a school development fund. The new policy led to significant increases in enrolment. Complete abolition of fees for primary education was decided in 1994 and led to further massive increases in enrolment. Complementary policies were introduced simultaneously with the abolition of fees (e.g. elimination of the requirement to wear uniforms, and priority for primary education in budgetary allocations). However, the success of these policies led to other challenges such as lack of facilities, shortages of qualified teachers and large class sizes. Moreover, the Government was not able to cover the loss in revenue from school fees, so parents continue to contribute for such things as sports, school materials and maintenance. Education in Malawi is therefore still not totally free but only fee-free.

41. Significant changes are taking place in the dynamics of education globally due to the growing demand, specialization and increased mobility characterizing the global context in which countries are attempting to ensure UA to higher education. The private market for higher education has grown significantly and is estimated to have reached US\$ 300 billion. Today more than 2.5 million students are enrolled in higher education in countries other than their country of origin. In this context, the question was raised as to what extent cross-border education could assist countries in achieving their goals of UA to higher education. Note was taken of the significant gap in enrolment rates between OECD countries (40 to 60 per cent) and in developing countries, where enrolment rates are below 5 per cent and insufficient to sustain economic development. Cross-border education is growing rapidly through distant education, franchising and branch campuses abroad, and the issue of their potential contribution to UA in developing countries needs to be taken into account. In this regard, concerns were expressed with respect to the ability of developing countries to devise mechanisms to ensure the quality of the education provided cross-border. Similarly, there might be a need to address concerns related to the commoditization of education services.

3. Health services

42. Traditionally, health services in developing countries have been provided by centralized public providers either through health ministries or social security systems. Responding to perceived state failure, in the 1990s many countries embarked on health system reforms aimed at increasing equity, efficiency, quality and user satisfaction. Latin American experiences were aimed at increasing the participation of the private sector in financing and delivering health services and at separating functions by allocating the role of regulator to the state while transferring other functions to the private sector. These reforms were also aimed at changing the allocation of subsidies to the demand side instead of the

supply side, as well as targeting them better. It was noted, based on the Chilean and Colombian experience, that the reforms have had limited success and have not significantly improved access to health services for the poor. It was suggested that they might have resulted in even more limited access to health services and that the new fragmented health care systems tend to be more inequitable than earlier ones, which were financed by central government revenues or mandatory insurance. In fact, market-based health care systems are more inefficient and result in higher administrative costs. The inability of the state to regulate private providers was also noted in the Latin American case. It was questioned, therefore, whether health services, access to which is a basic right of the population, can be treated simply as a commodity and governed exclusively by free market principles. The negative impact of user fees on access, particularly in African countries, underscored that point.

43. It was highlighted that the challenge in ensuring UA in the health sector is linked to the lack of clarity/understanding about what elements in the system are not performing or missing. Are difficulties associated with the health workforce, the cost of care or the lack of infrastructure? The supply of, but also the demand for, health services needs to be well understood by Governments. The mismatch between government resources and the goals to be achieved was emphasized.

44. The Cuban example in assuring universal access to health services demonstrates what can possibly be achieved through the direct involvement of the state in the provision of these services, where society attaches overriding priority to guaranteeing these rights to the population at large. Cuba has translated its national success in providing health services into South-South cooperation activities, and it is actively assisting other developing countries in improving health coverage for their populations.

45. The relevance of user fees in the health sector was discussed, and it was stated that a review of literature on user fees in this sector indicates that fees tend to decrease service utilization. Research also seems to point to the fact that foreign investment does not contribute to improving access to health services. For example, private insurers, whether domestic or foreign, tend to serve only higher-income and low-risk groups. It is not clear whether government policies and a strong regulatory framework could modify this trend in any way.

46. International trade in health services can bring about important benefits for UA to health services (e.g. by providing new technologies and increased capital, which can be expected to reduce the burden on government resources by allowing the public sector to reallocate resources toward the patients with less ability to pay), but it can also pose certain challenges (e.g. brain drain and cream skimming). However, uncertainty remains regarding the benefits (e.g. the expected reallocation of resources does not appear to be frequent). In order to reap fully the benefit of international trade in knowledge-intensive UA sectors (e.g. health or education services), there is a need to put in place complementary policies (e.g. policies to minimize brain drain, including by ensuring return or turning brain drain into brain circulation and ultimately brain gain).

4. Telecommunication services

47. Developed countries were the first to pursue UA policies in telecommunications and successfully achieve single household connectivity. Developing countries attach particular importance to UA in this area, but they have not been as successful in achieving their policy

objectives. Areas of greater poverty are also the areas of lowest teledensity, as seen in the case of South Africa.

48. Most UA policies were developed at a time when there were mostly only fixed-line operators, and they therefore sought to target this type of service, often excluding other types of providers and services. For example, in India and South Africa, there was the perception that mobile phones were luxury items, but in fact mobile telephony found substantial demand at the lower end of the market, with fixed lines seeing weak growth or, as in the case of India, a decline in demand.

49. The major source of financing for telecom operators consists of cross subsidies and access charges, which are used in 34 per cent of countries. More recently there has been growing interest in the use of universal access funds. Many countries have created such funds, but not all have been successful. In some cases, the concept of a UA fund is contained in legislation but not put into operation. In others, contributions are made but not disbursed. Some successful examples of UA funds are to be found in Latin America and more recently Africa, and India has also used UA funds successfully. The use of UA funds does pose challenges, and many participants argued that regulatory frameworks should be modified to allow more flexible use of these funds, for example to close gaps in the market and fund new PPPs. In Peru, for example, US funds were used exclusively to direct supply-side subsidies to the development of new network infrastructures in rural areas.

50. In South Africa, UA regulations have involved the use of three key policy measures in seeking to achieve universal access in telephony services. The first involved UA obligations attached to the operations of fixed-line operators. For instance, a leading fixed-line operator Telekom had to develop 2.7 million new lines, of which 1.7 million in under-serviced areas. The second policy measure involved the creation of universal service funds mandated by legislation with the objectives of granting access and ensuring affordability. The third regulatory intervention related to granting licences in under-serviced areas, though here too, as in the case of the universal access funds, the track record was not all positive. In general, the impact of UA policies ensuring universal service and access in South Africa has been mixed, while the number of mobile phones has skyrocketed. Notably, mobile operators have found it easy to implement their USOs, as compared to the fixed-line operators.

51. India's 170 million strong telephone network, including mobile phones, is one of the largest in the world and the second largest among emerging economies. The past few years have seen substantial growth, bringing the teledensity to 15 per cent, which was expected to be reached only by 2010. However, there is a wide gap between urban and rural teledensity, and rural teledensity is still below 2 per cent, as against urban teledensity of 48 per cent; some States have a rate as high as 77 per cent. While reforms in the telecom sector go back to the 1980s and were followed by the opening up of the manufacturing sector and value added services to private players, they gained momentum only after the economic reforms of the 1990s. The 1994 Telecom Policy recognized the large capital requirements and opened the way for private sector participation in Basic and Cellular Mobile Services. The year 1997 saw the setting-up of an independent Telecom Regulator (TRAI). The New Telecom Policy of 1999 initiated further reforms, boosting telecom growth. Fixed licence fees gave way to a revenue sharing regime, competition in all services, including the opening-up of the National Long Distance (NLD) and International Long Distance (ILD) Services, and the setting-up of an Arbitral Tribunal (TDSAT). Several other initiatives followed, like the introduction of Unified Access Services Licences, "calling party pays", and a steep reduction in entry fees

and licence fees in respect of ILD and NLD licences. Liberalization had a positive impact on teledensity, increased private sector participation, lowered costs and gave consumers a wider choice. With these measures and growing mobile usage, tariffs fell sharply, and India probably has the lowest tariffs in the world.

52. However, the Government recognized that markets alone would not address the problems of accessibility adequately, and the inclusion of the USO in policies was important. Competition and tariff rebalancing brought into focus the need to identify alternate ways to fulfil the USO and involve other service providers besides the incumbent operator. The aim of the USO is to provide access to telecom services in rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices. The scope has been widened recently to include support from the USO Fund, launched on 1 April 2002, for the creation of infrastructure for the provision of mobile services and for Broadband connectivity as well. For infrastructure, only a percentage of capital recovery is to be covered through the USO Fund, and sharing by at least three operators will be mandated. The Rules governing the scope and implementation of the USO are in place. Besides contributions from service providers, the Fund also provides for augmentation by way of grants and loans from the central Government. The Universal Service Levy is presently 5 per cent of the revenues of operators. A transparent competitive multi-layered reverse auction process is being followed for selection of universal service providers, and the last round of tenders saw growing interest on the part of private operators. A decentralized mechanism for submission and settlement of claims for subsidy exists, and e-submission is being encouraged. The USO is being administered through the Administrator of the USO Fund, whose office functions as an attached office of the Telecom Department. Separately, major initiatives taken by the Government and the private sector in bringing ICT to rural areas have clearly demonstrated that demand for access goes beyond plain voice. The USO Fund Administrator intends to leverage them to further USO goals. The importance of monitoring is recognized to ensure equitable and effective availability of services to the targeted population, and various measures have been taken in this regard. A multi-stakeholder approach has been adopted to policymaking in this area. With changing technologies and advances in the sector, the scope of the USO will continue to widen.

53. It was suggested that poor job-seekers are among the greatest beneficiaries of mobile telephony in Africa, where subscription levels are growing at a rate of over 100 per cent annually. The job-seekers often have no fixed home address or access to the Internet, and mobile phones provide them with a telephone number and the possibility of being contacted instantly by interested employers. The key issue here is inclusion: mobile phones provide the poor with a new facility that integrates them into local and national economies.

G. Issues arising in the context of the GATS negotiations

54. Discussion focused on the possible linkages between the GATS and UA policies, including the flexibilities that the GATS offers and the challenges it poses. As the results of liberalization and privatization are mixed, there is a call for flexibility and policy space to identify the best-fit regulation carefully and respond properly to calls for social justice and human development. The GATS does indeed offer flexibility for UA policies, more specifically through its concepts of progressive liberalization and positive listing for liberalization commitments and its (re)affirmation of Members' right to regulate and to establish national policy objectives. Importantly, the GATS recognizes the role of Governments in defining the services that they wish to liberalize.

55. Accordingly, liberalization commitments in UA-related sectors vary, depending on among other things a country's perception of the sector's importance and sensitivity. While the telecom sector exhibits a significant number of bindings, fewer commitments exist in health and education, with an even smaller number of commitments in energy- and water-related services. A similar trend can be observed in Members' offers: most improvements were made in sectors where high numbers of commitments already exist (i.e. tourism, telecommunications, financial and business) and fewer in sectors such as to health or education services.

56. However, the propensity to schedule a particular sector is not always correlated with the role of UA policies/USOs in that sector. While USOs play an important role for telecom services, Members have nevertheless scheduled a considerable number of commitments. In that context, it was noted that the Telecom Reference Paper explicitly grants Members the freedom to define the type of USO they wish to maintain.

57. Similarly, the pattern of conditions/limitations for USOs (UA-related measures) does not directly reflect the extent of UA policies at the domestic level. Importantly, some Governments aim to enhance UA to services through measures that do not need to be scheduled, such as direct hand-outs and other non-discriminatory measures (e.g. producer subsidies and producer-related regulations). This was illustrated by reference to USOs in the health and financial services sectors: one Asian country, for example, requires all commercially established hospitals to provide 20 per cent of their services to the poor; another country requires all banks established in the capital to operate subsidiaries in all other major cities throughout the country. None of the measures were reflected (as conditions) in liberalization commitments, because they are imposed on all service providers in a non-discriminatory manner, regardless of ownership and nationality. Other Members have resorted to the (even more prudent) approach of scheduling the sector as "unbound". In such cases, it is difficult to determine the extent of USOs (UA-related measures) at the national level.

58. With respect to further liberalization commitments in UA-related sectors, their extent and nature will only be seen after the resumption of negotiations. Some pointed to the inherent logic and dynamic of the GATS' liberalization negotiations, in essence questioning the flexibilities which the GATS scheduling approach can theoretically offer. In that context, attention was also drawn to the uncertainties and vagueness surrounding central GATS provisions, with the Agreement's carve-out for "public services" serving as a key example. More specifically, this carve-out excludes "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority", defining further that this means "any service which is supplied neither on a commercial basis nor in competition with one or more service suppliers". One view was expressed on the WTO panel ruling in the *Telmex* case, suggesting that the ruling highlighted the need for caution and prudence when scheduling GATS commitments. Some referred to the suggestion to allow a roll-back of GATS commitments in line with UA objectives.

59. On the other hand, some emphasized that UA should not be used as an argument to exclude specific services sectors (or at least those parts that are economically viable and can be provided by the private sector) from offers/negotiations. Others, in turn, pointed to the fact that the need for discriminatory measures cannot always be ruled out. In sum, issues related to UA goals and trade are not always easy to delineate. Such difficulties also highlight the importance of consulting domestic stakeholder in sensitive sectors.

60. Flexibilities for UA-related policies also play a major role in negotiations for future disciplines on domestic regulation. Many emphasized the importance of striking the right balance between underpinning market access and retaining Members' right to regulate. The necessity test was highlighted as one of the most contentious and central issues, sometimes perceived as impeding the flexibility of regulators. Some pointed to the difficulties in operationalizing the requirement that domestic regulations be the "least burdensome" necessary, a requirement that is not necessarily in line with the goals and objectives of domestic regulators. Reference was made to the challenges arising from WTO dispute settlement in that context.

61. The potential impacts of future disciplines on domestic regulation on Members' right to regulate and their ability to conduct trial-and-error processes when identifying their best-fit policies are issues of particular concern for developing countries, where regulatory frameworks are still at an emerging stage. It was stressed that countries lacking regulatory capacity cannot and should not open markets without regulatory frameworks being in place. Questions of developing countries' regulatory preparedness also arise with respect to the future disciplines' possible reference to international standards or requirements for transparency and prior consent. In that context, it was highlighted that some of the proposals made in the Working Party on Domestic Regulation (PDR) would dramatically increase the "regulatory risk". Similarly, the borderline between the process and substance of regulation would not always be easy to determine.

62. Accordingly, several of the developing countries' proposals to the WPDR stress flexibility for UA-related (and other) issues. For example, they affirm Members' right to define the type of USOs they wish to maintain, or they refrain from including the so-called necessity test. Some of these suggestions are reflected in the Chair's working paper. A view was expressed that the paper did not fully include all ACP and SVE proposals. The paper's section on development issues also includes language stating that LDCs shall not be bound by any future disciplines that will affect their specific interests. The WPDR's working paper is intended to serve as a basis for discussions; so far, important sticking points remain (e.g. on issues related to necessity, technical standards, qualification requirements and transparency).

63. The view was expressed that USOs should be targeted as narrowly as possible to achieve their UA-related objectives. Similarly, trade agreements should be neutral as to the question of USOs. While the role of trade agreements is to foster competitive markets, with priority given to fairness and non-discrimination, there is no inherent contradiction between trade rules and UA policies and objectives. Regarding Members' right to regulate, a balance should be sought, and care should be taken not to succumb to calls for protection voiced by particular interest groups.

64. UA requirements can be used for either domestic or foreign private providers as a means to free up government resources to meet other public interest goals. There is a need to build on best practices, and South-South trade can offer a tool to transfer success to other developing countries.

H. Conclusions

1. Policy recommendations

65. The primacy of the role of the state needs to be recognized in ensuring universal access to essential services, either through direct provision or through active pursuit of

targeted policies at the national and subnational levels. The specific choice of policies and the role of the state in ensuring universal access to essential services will depend on the national context, including the level of development, regulatory, institutional and legal frameworks and capacities, and available human and financial resources. The experience of countries in improving access to essential services can be transferred to a different national context only to a limited degree. Accordingly, it is for each country to identify its best-fit policy (coherently addressing all essential services), a process which can benefit from lessons learned and best practices of others. Governments would be expected to assume overall responsibility for assuring UA to essential services through implementation of different schemes, for example through participation of the private sector, communities or not-for-profit initiatives in providing the services. Many pointed to the importance of ensuring flexibility and policy space for Governments so that they can adjust their goals to economic, social and technological development, develop closely interrelated services, and target specific measures at the marginalized and poor segments of the population, particularly through subsidies.

66. UA objectives need to reflect national development objectives and be forward-looking. In the past, short-term approaches advocated by the international financial institutions have led to market-based solutions being chosen for the provision of essential services in the expectation of a quicker and more efficient response. However, fine-tuning of policies to optimize results should be a long-term effort aimed at assuring sustainability of UA. Some suggested that domestic measures aimed at encouraging the performance of local firms support and even need to precede the opening-up of markets to international competition. This ensures that all market players can take full advantage of the benefits that arise with the entry of FDI into the local market. Boosting competitiveness may require intensive government support, as well as the support of international organizations that aim at building capacity and infrastructure for essential services.

67. Poverty needs to be addressed as a priority policy consideration in ensuring UA to essential services. Hence, economic efficiency considerations and provision of access to essential services for the population at large should be approached from the poverty point of view. Improving access to essential services can play a crucial role in mitigating poverty, as well as reducing economic gaps between different segments of the population and also between countries. As a result, achieving an adequate balance between equity and efficiency will be a core concern and challenge when designing UA policies. The public and the private sector are found to be similarly efficient.

68. Merely establishing national UA policies is not sufficient. Progress in the provision of essential services also requires appropriate regulations and institutions. Given the close interrelationship between essential services, many suggested that a holistic approach to UA policy is required. Robust regulatory frameworks need to be put in place and universal access objectives set according to national development objectives. Pacing and sequencing of policies, as well as the content of policies, is a very important issue. It is imperative to have regulations in place before liberalization takes place. UA-related policies need to be translated all the way down to local levels of government. National authorities need to ensure multi-stakeholder consultation, regulation, monitoring and related supervisory activities. Privatization and liberalization in the absence of effective regulation and competitive markets will reduce the likelihood that UA goals will be achieved. Efficient UA policies require a clear allocation of obligations and responsibilities, in particular a demarcation between public

authorities, sectoral operators, both public and private, and regulatory authorities in order to ensure independent regulation and implementation of policies (e.g. for contract tenders).

69. Past experience with the provision of essential services through regulated market-based approaches in the water, education and energy sectors has delivered mixed results in terms of how well universal access objectives were met. This has been explained in part in terms of regulatory and institutional shortcomings that negatively affected the access, availability and affordability objectives desired for basic services for the poor.

70. The role of community-based service providers has been increasing in the context of improving delivery of essential services. Universal access needs to be designed and applied using nationally agreed principles for public services to ensure that broad-based economic and social development goals are advanced at the national level, including by local actors and small providers/operators.

2. UNCTAD's work

71. UNCTAD should continue and strengthen its work in the area of UA to services in a number of areas. With a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it should for example:

(a) Support efforts of developing countries in their assessment of the role of the state, privatization and trade liberalization in the area of essential services, including at the local level; analyse the interlinkages between UA-related services sectors and the related policies,

(b) Undertake work to achieve a better understanding of the definition, scope, classification and coverage of essential services;

(c) Analyse best practices and best-fit policies to promote access to universal services;

(d) Jointly with other relevant international organizations, work on developing countries' policies and regulations in the area of essential services, in particular those promoting the role of SMEs and the contribution of local communities, including through research and studies;

(e) Identify ways of overcoming challenges facing developing countries in their access to essential services, taking into consideration new developments in markets, technology and regulations. It would be important to assess the potential for clustering within the services-based economy;

(f) Identify ways to improve infrastructure and policy frameworks for essential services providers in developing countries, and, more broadly, analyse to what extent trade agreements can help to achieve universal access to essential services, including by promoting South–South trade and cooperation;

(g) Analyse regulatory and competition-related issues in essential services;

(h) Contribute to international, regional and national efforts to improve statistical data collection and availability, especially in developing countries, in order to better reflect trade- and development-related issues in the area of universal access to essential services;

(i) Assist developing countries in improving their understanding of the linkages between GATS negotiations UA to services, including through studies and expert meetings analysing issues related to domestic regulation and subsidies.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

72. At its opening meeting, the Expert Meeting elected the following officers to serve on its bureau:

Chairperson: Mr. Enrique Manalo (Philippines)
Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur: Ms. Claudia Guevara de la Jara (Peru)

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

73. At the same meeting, the Expert Meeting adopted the provisional agenda circulated in document TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/1. The agenda of the meeting was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Universal access to services
4. Adoption of the report of the meeting

C. Documentation

74. For its consideration of the substantive agenda item, the Expert Meeting had before it an issues note prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat: "Universal access to services" (TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/2).

D. Adoption of the report of the Meeting

(Agenda item 4)

75. At its closing session, the Expert Meeting authorized the Rapporteur to prepare the final report of the Meeting under the authority of the Chairperson.

Annex**ATTENDANCE²**

1. Experts from the following States members of UNCTAD attended the Meeting:

Afghanistan	Lithuania
Algeria	Madagascar
Antigua and Barbuda	Malaysia
Argentina	Mauritius
Australia	Mexico
Azerbaijan	Moldova
Bangladesh	Mozambique
Belarus	Nepal
Belgium	Nigeria
Benin	Netherlands
Bhutan	New Zealand
Bolivia	Oman
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Pakistan
Botswana	Paraguay
Brazil	Peru
Cambodia	Philippines
Cape Verde	Republic of Korea
China	Russian Federation
Colombia	Rwanda
Cuba	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Samoa
Dominican Republic	Serbia
Estonia	South Africa
Ethiopia	Spain
Finland	Sri Lanka
Germany	Sudan
Ghana	Switzerland
Greece	Syrian Arab Republic
Haiti	Thailand
Hungary	Timor-Leste
India	Trinidad and Tobago
Indonesia	Turkey
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Uganda
Italy	United Republic of Tanzania
Jordan	United States of America
Kenya	Yemen
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Zambia
Lesotho	Zimbabwe
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	

² For the list of participants, see TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/INF.1.

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the Meeting:
 - African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
 - African Union
 - Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation
 - Andean Community
 - Commonwealth Secretariat
 - South Centre

3. The following United Nations agencies were represented at the Meeting:
 - Economic Commission for Africa
 - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
 - United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

4. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the Meeting:
 - United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 - World Health Organization
 - World Trade Organization

5. The following non-governmental organizations attended the Meeting:
 - General Category*
 - BPW International
 - Engineers of the World
 - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
 - International Council of Nurses
 - International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations
 - Oxfam International
 - Special Category*
 - Center for International Environmental Law

6. The following panellists attended the Meeting:
 - 14 November**
 - Ms. Cecilia Ugaz, Acting Deputy Director, Human Development Report Office, UNDP
 - Mr. Aaditya, Mattoo, Lead Economist, Development Research Group, World Bank
 - Mr. Dale Andrew, Head of Trade Policy Linkages Division, Trade Directorate, OECD
 - Mr. Jean-Yves Barcelo, Interregional Adviser, Urban and Housing Finance, UN-HABITAT
 - Mr. Yves Berthelot, Senior Special Fellow, UNITAR
 - Mr. Martín Rodríguez Pardina, International Consultant, Argentina
 - Ms. Susan L. Robertson, Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol
 - Mr. Christoph Rames, Counsellor, European Commission, DG Trade

Mr. Thomas Van Waeyenberge, European Affairs Officer, AquaFed, Belgium
Mr. David Hall, Director, Public Services International Research Unit

15 November

Mr. Filemon Berba, former Vice Chairman, President and CEO of Manila Water Company Inc, Philippines
Mr. Rene Orellana, former Vice Minister of Basic Services, Ministry of Water, Bolivia
Mr. Xavier Maitrerobert, Senior Water Adviser, AquaFed, France
Ms. Belinda U. Calaguas, Head of Policy, WaterAid, UK
Ms. Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic, Chief, Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality Assurance, UNESCO
Ms. Esme Chipo Kadzarmira, Research Fellow, Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT), University of Malawi
Mr. G.K. Chadha, Member, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, India
Ms. Jeanette Vega, Director, Equity, Poverty and Social Determinants, WHO, Geneva
Mr. Pongpisut Jongudomsuk, National Project Director, Health Care Reform Project, Thailand
Ms. Daisy Mafubelu, Health Attaché, Permanent Mission of South Africa, Geneva
Ms. Nuria Homedes, Associate Professor, Coordinator of the Global Health Program, University of Texas, School of Public Health
Ms. Chantal Blouin, Senior Researcher, North South Institute, Canada

16 November

Ms. Susan Schorr, Regulatory Officer, Regulatory Reform Unit
Ms. Roopa Joshi, Market Economics and Finance Unit, ITU, Geneva
Ms. Lee Tuthill, Counsellor, Trade in Services Division, WTO, Geneva
Mr. Jorge Bossio, International Affairs Officer, OSIPTEL, Peru
Ms. Sadhana Dikshit, Deputy Director General, Department of Telecom, India
Mr. Charley Lewis, LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
Mr. Neil Gough, Director, International Policy Group Public Policy Department Vodafone, United Kingdom
Mr. Hamid Mamdouh, Director, Trade in Services Division, WTO
H.E. Mr. Fernando De Mateo Y Venturini, Ambassador of Mexico to the WTO, Geneva
Mr. Peter Govindasamy, Chairman, Working Party on Domestic Regulation
Mr. José Victor Chan-Gonzaga, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the WTO, Geneva
Mr. Christopher Melly, Deputy Assistant, USTR for Services Trade
Mr. Rabson Wanjala, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Kenya, Geneva

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