

**THE PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND
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**Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit
on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels**

by

**Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the UN
(CONGO)**

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Written contribution to the CSTD Intersession Panel of the
Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the UN (CONGO)
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***“Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit
on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels”***

The UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development held in May 2007 its first session since its strengthening by ECOSOC Resolution 2006/46. In addition to expanding the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission, ECOSOC had translated a key provision of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society: “taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach” (paragraph 105 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society) into a UN substantive Commission. The 10th session of the CSTD represented an unprecedented challenge: First, the Commission had to incorporate and set in motion an additional major part of its mandate; It also had to insert itself in the whole institutional architecture following the Tunis Summit; It was finally necessary to fully accommodate the increased membership and a broader participation of NGOs and the private sector, using the multi-stakeholder approach effectively.

We consider that the 10th session of the CSTD concluded in a very positive note with the adoption of a decision on the CSTD multi-year program of work and provided the Commission with the required long-term predictability in planning its activities. The Commission also adopted a Resolution on the Flow of Information for the Follow-up to WSIS, providing a logical articulation between the implementation efforts and the follow-up activities. However we do believe that a number of issues are not yet finalized and still need to be strengthened. This notably includes:

- implementation of the multi-stakeholder approach in the CSTD;
- articulation between the implementation and the follow-up processes;
- organisation of the work of the 11th session;

The up coming 11th session of the CSTD will therefore represent a real credibility check for the CSTD in finalizing the institution building process of the CSTD and in providing an effective space to fully review and assess progress of implementation and to identify measures for furthering implementation of the Tunis outcomes and overcoming obstacles and constraints encountered. We believe the CSTD Intersession Panel constitutes a major and relevant occasion for the consolidation of a common understanding on the unfinished business.

We therefore forward to the Intersession Panel the following comments and suggestions:

Implementation of the multi-stakeholder approach in the CSTD

Basic UN rules and modalities for the engagement of non State stakeholders set up the frame of their right to be heard and to participate. But the way such rules have been implemented and put in motion in a number of arenas has demonstrated their flexible potentials. The provisions of the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 have been implemented in very diverse ways in the various ECOSOC Commissions, from the de facto equality between the three categories of ECOSOC status in the former Commission on Human Rights to the establishment of 9 Major Groups in the Commission on Sustainable Development. In the case of the CSTD in particular, the Secretariat and the Chairperson will have a major role to constructively interpret the meaning of ECOSOC 2006/46 and to use the flexibility of the current arrangements to apply the multi-stakeholder effectively.

1. Qualitative participation of all stakeholders during the CSTD session: the component of the multi-stakeholder approach to be used by the CSTD is not only limited to the issue of determining the list of non State entities allowed to take part in the CSTD deliberations. It should also include participation modalities which guarantee the greatest and most direct interaction between all categories of stakeholders on a given issue. It therefore implies that:
 - Civil society and private sector entities can participate in and contribute to all Plenary segments and each agenda item of the CSTD;
 - Civil society and private sector entities can attend any informal meeting of the Commission and can make propositions and suggestions in the course of any discussion leading to the decision making process of the Commission; the multi-stakeholder approach should ensure that non governmental stakeholders can have a relevant role in the process of shaping decisions and outcomes;
 - Civil society, the private sector, international organisations and Member States should be given the possibility to organise activities during the annual session of the Commission, under the format of side events, panel or briefings, in addition to the Plenary meetings of the Commission;
 - The direct interactions between the CSTD Bureau and representatives of other stakeholders groups and the organisation of multi-stakeholder panels should continue;

- Transparency of available information and of on going processes is a key element for the long term success of the CSTD. Transparency guarantees more inclusiveness and more equality among the various categories of stakeholders. Information should therefore reach Member States and other categories of stakeholders in the same way.
2. Involvement of all stakeholders in the sessions' preparations: The intersession period, including beyond the CSTD Intersession Panel, should be fully exploited as a preparatory exercise by all stakeholders. To that end, the CSTD Bureau and the CSTD Secretariat should enhance the flow of information towards and between all stakeholders. As proposed by some organisations during the 10th session of the CSTD, a multi-stakeholder advisory group to assist and provide advice to the CSTD Bureau and the Secretariat in the preparation of the CSTD annual session and related intersession events could be envisaged.
 3. Strengthening the multi-stakeholder component of the CSTD outcomes: The elaboration of the outcome of the CSTD session should be adapted to the principles of the multi-stakeholder approach. Preferably, the CSTD outcome could take shape of a Chairperson's statement, which could be supported by member States and by other stakeholders. If adopting negotiated texts, all efforts should be made to ensure a consensus outcome, including with non-State stakeholders, and to involve all stakeholders in making contribution proposals to the text. It is agreed that at the end of an open consultation process on the text to be tabled, Member States will remain the only entities with a right to vote. In any event, multi-stakeholder participation modalities may consist in participatory mechanisms facilitating a collaborative and mutually acceptable decision-making.
 4. Ensuring the inclusive involvement of all stakeholders: the interim modalities adopted for the participation of WSIS accredited civil society entities in the next two sessions of the CSTD paved the way for the future criteria for CS involvement in the work of the Commission. However, given the fast-evolving nature of issues related to the information society and in order to make sure that the most relevant actors be able to participate in the CSTD, we might be confronted with complex situations in the framework of the upcoming CSTD sessions:
 - Academic institutions, research centres as well as local authorities were included during the WSIS process under the civil society umbrella. It is most unlikely that these entities will receive or even look for the ECOSOC consultative status;
 - A number of NGOs, not accredited to WSIS, will have the possibility to participate in the multi-stakeholder implementation process at the international and regional levels or in the Internet Governance Forum, but will not be allowed to contribute to the system wide follow up process;
 - In addition, newly created non-governmental organisations active in the building of the information society and having valuable contributions to make to the CSTD work would have to wait for two or three years that their application to the ECOSOC status be considered by the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs.

Such a situation is not beneficial to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, since it may lose the valuable inputs of a number of actors. A pragmatic solution would be to extend the modality used for the participation of business sector entities in the work of the Commission to a wider category of civil society actors not in consultative status with the ECOSOC, in particular for academic institutions, local authorities and civil society involved in the WSIS implementation at the international and regional levels or in the Internet Governance Forum.

Methodology and articulation between the implementation and the follow-up processes

5. Implementation of the multi-year work program: We welcome the adoption of a multi-year program of work, which will increase the predictability of the annual CSTD session and its capacity to effectively further the Geneva and Tunis outcomes. We understand this multi-year program of work as a thematic focus of the CSTD session to address a cross-cutting trend related to the building of the Information Society. But this should not exclude discussing about other pressing issues identified from the implementation process, as well as to address emerging issues of the information society: Such an approach would fully recognise the dynamic and fast-evolving nature of ICT and information society issues in the work of the CSTD.
6. Participation of all stakeholders in the reporting process: We encourage the Secretariat to reach out and collect inputs from all entities, as appropriate, involved in WSIS implementation activities. This should also include inputs towards the elaboration of the SG annual report to the Commission provided by NGOs, civil society entities and private sector entities which would have valuable contributions to make in this regard.
7. Coherence between existing processes: The CSTD is inserting itself in the broader institutional framework following the Tunis Summit. ECOSOC 2006/46 as well as the decision on the Flow of information adopted

by the Commission in 2007 did strengthen the articulation between the decentralised implementation at the international level and the system wide follow-up. The work of the Commission is also closely related to the activities of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) and to a certain extent of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The CSTD Secretariat and Secretariats of other international organisations or programmes involved in this architecture should work in very close interaction to make sure that the articulation and the complementarities between these processes are fully coherent.

8. Preparations to the 2008 IS related cluster of events: The up-coming cluster of WSIS related events taking place in May 2008 in Geneva should be organised with great care, because it will set precedents in terms of working modalities for the future cycles of implementation and follow-up. As a multi-faceted, multi-stakeholder series of meetings, the plans related to the IS cluster of meetings should be shared in a transparent manner to all stakeholders involved in this process, allowing for some feedback and suggestions. This would strengthen the common understanding and ownership of the process, as well as helping to increase its overall institutional coherence.

Organisation of the work of the 11th session of the CSTD

The 10th session of the CSTD was marked by a very high level of uncertainty and unpredictability. Everyday, it was hardly possible to know which issue would be discussed during a meeting of the session before it actually started. Members of the Commission and other stakeholders actually lost a high number of hours in discussing procedural issues rather than giving consideration to the fulfilment of the CSTD mandate and addressing the follow up to WSIS in a result oriented manner. Now that the institution building of the CSTD is broadly finalized, we need to ensure that what happened in May 2007 does not occur again in 2008 and that the CSTD is fully able to fulfil its mandate.

9. Maximizing the time available and focusing on fulfilling the CSTD mandate: all stakeholders should avoid devoting any minute of the CSTD session on anything else than fulfilling the mandate of the CSTD, as described in ECOSOC Resolution 2006/46. The CSTD Plenary sessions should not be devoted to presentations taking stock of which actor did what to implement the WSIS outcomes: any stock taking activity should take place outside, before or in parallel to the CSTD Plenary meeting, in order to allow all stakeholders to effectively review and assess the implementation progress, share best practices, and identify obstacles and measures. The task of the CSTD is to be critical and constructive. Therefore, the CSTD Secretariat should make meeting rooms available for side events to be organised by any stakeholder willing to present its activities. The outcomes of such side events or presentations meetings could be summarized and fed into the work of the Commission as part of the best practice sharing or dialogue promotion and partnership fostering.

We believe that at least 3 full working days should be devoted to the fulfilment of the WSIS follow-up mandate of the CTSD. Any segment or panel of the CSTD session should be meant to contribute to the CSTD mandate.

10. Organisation of the session around targeted multi-stakeholder interactive dialogues: following the examples of other entities within the United Nations and within ECOSOC and with the view to implement the provisions of paragraph 12 of ECOSOC Resolution 2006/46, the program of work of the Annual CSTD Session should be organised around a number of thematic and well oriented interactive dialogues involving members States, civil society actors and representatives from the private sector. In addition to the two interactive dialogues with the regional commission and with the leading facilitating agencies, other interactive dialogues could be organised on the focus theme identified in the multi-year programme of work and on other general aspects of the WSIS follow up and the building of the information society. Building on existing practices, each interactive dialogue should be scheduled for a three-hour time slot and can include the participation of resource persons. 6 interactive dialogues could therefore be organised if three days of meetings are devoted to the WSIS follow-up. The themes of the interactive dialogues should be determined by the CSTD Bureau in consultation with the CSTD Secretariat and all stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive manner.
11. Identify priority issues: The priority issues under focus theme of the biennium cycles should be determined by the CSTD Bureau in consultation with the CSTD Secretariat and all stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive manner. This would facilitate the preparation of inputs of all stakeholders, but would also increase the visibility and the attractiveness of the CTSD sessions for stakeholders working on specific issues.
12. Ensuring a dynamic follow-up process towards the next CSTD session: an effective follow-up process should be established on critical issues identified through the Commission's work. A multi-stakeholder model drawing from IGF experience to establish Dynamic Coalitions, or the potential of GAID and its Communities of Expertise could be used and could maximize the CSTD to bring additional expertise if

required and to consider options of important measures to further the WSIS outcomes and overcome obstacles and constraints in the WSIS implementation.

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The up-coming 11th session of the CSTD will be the first cycle of the consideration of the CSTD programme of work. The CSTD will only continue to attract a good number of non-governmental and business stakeholders if it proved to be a worthwhile instrument to further the implementation of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes. It is therefore in the interest of the CSTD and of all stakeholders involved in its deliberations to ensure that the 11th session of the Commission offers an inclusive and effective platform to fulfil its mandate.