Briefing by the secretariat on the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in the review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Geneva, 3 March 2023

Work of the CSTD in the follow up to WSIS

The work of the CSTD in the follow up to WSIS is based on GA resolution 60/252 of 27 April 2006, and ECOSOC resolution 2006/46. Specifically, ECOSOC mandated the CSTD to serve as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS) and advise the Council about it, including through the elaboration of recommendations to the Council aimed at furthering the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

To that end, every year the Commission considers a Report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of WSIS outcomes, which reviews and assesses progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of action lines, recommendations and commitments contained in the outcome of the Summit. This is done on the basis of inputs from a wide range of stakeholders including all the action line facilitators. The Commission also submits to the ECOSOC an annual draft resolution on this matter.

In addition to this annual review work, over the years the ECOSOC and the General Assembly have requested the CSTD to conduct specific work on aspects of the WSIS outcome, such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the process of enhanced cooperation in public policy matters pertaining to the Internet as contained in the Tunis Agenda.

Regarding the Internet Governance Forum, the CSTD convened a Working Group with member States and other stakeholders that met five times in 2011 and 2012 and submitted a set of agreed recommendations to the CSTD, the ECOSOC and the General Assembly. The recommendations were endorsed by the GA in resolution 70/125, which also extended for a further 10 years the mandate of the IGF.

As for the question of enhanced cooperation, the CSTD convened two working groups on the matter. The first one held four meetings between 2013 and 2014. The Working Group could not submit agreed recommendations although the Chair's report referred to the emergence of consensus on several points. In 2015, the GA invited the Chair of the CSTD to convene a new multistakeholder working group on this matter. The second WG met between 2016 and 2018. Although, again, considerable progress was made on a number of points, the WG was unable to reach consensus on a set of recommendations.

All the inputs submitted by stakeholders in the context of the various working groups and transcripts of the discussions are available in the CSTD's web site, which is a unique repository on information about the positions of different stakeholders on these important dimensions of the WSIS outcomes.

WSIS +10 process in the CSTD

In January 2013, GA resolution 67/195 requested the SG to submit to the 68th session, through CSTD and ECOSOC, a report related to the overall ten-year review of the WSIS, as part of his annual reporting on WSIS.

Also in 2013, ECOSOC resolution 2013/9 requested the CSTD to collect inputs from all facilitators and stakeholders and to organize in 2014 a substantive discussion on the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and to report to the General Assembly. It also requested the CSTD to submit, after its eighteenth session (2015), the results of its 10-year WSIS review, through the Council, to the General Assembly for its 2015 overall review.

Following a substantive discussion at its seventeenth session in May 2014, the CSTD launched an open consultation including online inputs, regional meetings and written contributions. Six regional events were organized between June and October 2014 in conjunction with other WSIS related events in Geneva, Abuja, Istanbul, Guadalajara (Mexico), and Bangkok. These were also reflected in a 10-year review report ([Implementing WSIS Outcomes: A 10 year Review](#)) that was prepared by the secretariat and submitted to the 18th session of the CSTD in May 2015. All this effort was financed by a trust fund that had contributions from the US, Switzerland and Finland. A staff member at the P4 level was also seconded by the Finnish ministry of foreign affairs to support this process.

The 18th session of the CSTD had an extensive discussion on this issue, that was reported to the GA through ECOSOC as an annex to the report of the annual session ([E/2015/31-E/CN.16/2015/4](#)). Delegations were invited to provide in writing the observations made during the discussion. Those observations can be found at the website of the Commission, together with the full transcript of the session.

ECOSOC resolution [2015/26](#) took note of the report of the 18th session of the CSTD, including the summary of the substantive discussion on the 10-year review and the link to the interventions and decided to forward it to the preparatory process of the high-level meeting of the GA. It also took note of the secretariat report, which was the basis for the substantive discussion, and decided to submit it also to the preparatory process of the high-level meeting of the GA.

Between May and December 2015 UNCTAD organized events at the IGF, WSIS Forum, and the GA to disseminate the outcomes of the CSTD WSIS +10 review.

Other processes

In addition to the CSTD and the GA review, other processes took place in 2013-2015.

ITU hosted the WSIS+10 High-Level Event, an extended version of the annual WSIS Forum, in June 2014. This was co-organized by ITU, with UNESCO, UNCTAD and UNDP. It adopted two WSIS+10 outcome documents prepared through the Multi-stakeholder Participatory Platform: the WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS Outcomes, and the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015. These were endorsed by ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in October/November 2014 and transmitted to the GA process.

UNESCO held a WSIS+10 review event, held in 2013 – Towards Knowledge Societies for Peace and Sustainable Development. UNCTAD, which was holding the UNGIS chair was actively involved in this event too, including the participation of the SG in several panels.

UNGIS itself prepared a joint statement in 2015 that was submitted to the General Assembly process.

General Assembly overall WSIS +10 review

The General Assembly overall review after ten years of implementation of WSIS outcomes was mandated by paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda.

Resolution 67/195 of 29 January 2013 decided that the modalities of the GA review would be adopted by the end of that year. A final decision could not be reached and resolution 68/198 of 20 December 2013 decided to finalize this by March 2014. Eventually those modalities were defined in resolution 68/302 of 31 July 2014. It was decided to hold a two-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, which would be preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory process in New York.

The review process started in June 2015 when the President of the GA designated two co-facilitators. The GA overall review was an intergovernmental negotiation that drew from inputs from Member and observer States and other observers, and the final report of the CSTD (which was completed at the annual session in June 2015 as noted above). Two intergovernmental meetings took pace, in July and October 2015. During the intergovernmental process in the GA consultations were held by the co-facilitators with WSIS stakeholders to collect their inputs.

The GA High-level Meeting took place on 15-16 December 2015.The outcome document is contained in resolution A/70/125 of 16 December 2015. The resolution explicitly mentioned the CSTD report as the first of the inputs on which the GA review of WSIS was built.

As also noted above, resolution 70/125 supported the recommendations of the CSTD's Working Group on Improvements to the IGF (2011-2012). The GA. Regarding enhanced cooperation the resolution requested the Chair of the CSTD to establish a working group to develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis

Agenda. The resolution also called for the continuation of the CSTD's annual reports on WSIS outcomes implementation.

Finally, resolution 70/125 decided that a high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society would be held in 2025, involving the input and participation of all stakeholders, including in the preparatory process, to take stock of progress on the outcomes of the World Summit and identify both areas of continued focus and challenges. It recommended that the outcome of the high-level meeting should be an input into the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Resolution 70/125 did not define the role of the CSTD in the 2025 review process. If the WSIS +20 process is to follow the same lines as in 2015 this would need to be defined by the GA and ECOSOC following the precedent described above.

Considerations about the WSIS +20 Review

The first lesson that can be drawn from the WSIS +10 exercise is that the definition of the precise format and expected outcomes of the exercise may take time and require some consensus-building effort. The implication is that the process should start sufficiently early. One first step could be to include in the annual WSIS draft resolution language by which the ECOSOC would invite the CSTD to start this exercise with a view to completing its WSIS +20 review in time for it to be submitted to the GA through ECOSOC before the beginning of the GA review.

A second consideration is that a good quality review will require extensive outreach by CSTD to a broad range of stakeholders. In the WSIS +10 review the secretariat organized several dedicated events in all regions, often in collaboration with regional commissions and other organizations and taken advantage of participation at relevant events. A similar effort should be undertaken for the WSIS +20 review, with the necessary adaptions drawing from the knowledge gained during the pandemic about how best to use virtual interaction tools.

Third point: Virtual consultations among the CSTD members themselves may be useful. It does not seem realistic to expect that this exercise, which will have to deal with a much more complex reality than WSIS +10, can be dealt in the short time available at the annual CSTD sessions.

Fourth and last, the CSTD's WSIS +10 review benefited from an in-depth background document that was prepared by the secretariat and that was also submitted to the GA. A similar document could be produced for WSIS +20, that looks into the accelerating changes in digital technologies that have transformed the reality addressed by WSIS outcomes and analyzes their implications for the relevance of the WSIS aspirations and for the emergence of new threats and opportunities. The outreach exercise and the analytical effort that the secretariat deployed for WSIS +10 were possible only because of the availability of extrabudgetary resources that, critically, were earmarked for WSIS follow up activities of the CSTD. Funds would need to be identified to enable a similar effort for the WSIS +20 process.