

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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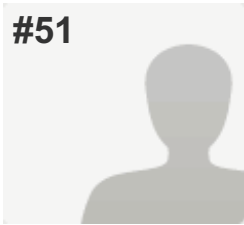
**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS
outcomes**

Submitted by

CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY & TECHNOLOGY

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Q3: Organisation:

Center for Democracy & Technology

Q4: Country:

United Kingdom

Q6: Which stakeholder category do you belong to?

Civil Society

Q7: To what extent, in your experience, has the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?

A "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society" has only developed in part during the ten years since the WSIS and should remain a goal for all stakeholders in the post-2015 world. There is no doubt that economic growth and technological developments over the past 10 years have contributed greatly to progress towards realizing the WSIS goal. Technological developments have enabled unprecedented involvement by individuals in governance and society, bringing about their empowerment and the realization of their human rights. The degree to which a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented society has been achieved has, however, varied greatly from country to country and from region to region. Where progress has been made it has usually been driven by economic growth and opportunity, increased connectivity and access to ICTs, enabling environments, training and capacity building, and the establishment of institutions and governance structures that are open, people-centered and inclusive.

The WSIS+10 High Level Event (HLE) outcome documents recognize the important impact that ICTs have had on the information society but also note that ICTs are not ubiquitously available nor, when they are available, is it always possible for individuals to exploit their potential. The Geneva Principles call for people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information societies so that "everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." There are countries in which access is limited and significant restrictions are placed on what information and knowledge individuals can share for political, economic development or cultural reasons. There are countries in which human rights are not fully respected and/or flouted both at home and abroad in the name of national security. Some of these same countries participated in the WSIS and its review. Much work still needs to be done at national, regional and international levels to enable individuals, communities and peoples can achieve their full potential and truly enjoy people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information societies.

Significant challenges remain, particularly as the goal of a development-oriented information society has slipped from the WSIS agenda. During the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis, Internet governance and the role of governments in the governance of the Internet came to the fore and have occupied much of the WSIS and related processes since. Both the IGF and the process of enhanced cooperation (however defined) are WSIS outcomes, but they have distracted stakeholders from other substantive discussions of perhaps greater relevance to development oriented information societies due to their inherently political nature. Since the Geneva Principles, development issues have been inadequately addressed – linkages to the MDGs during the WSIS were insufficient and linkages to the SDGs going forward are, so far, undefined. While the WSIS+10 HLE recognizes the need for "ensuring proper integration of the WSIS and the Post-2015 Development Agenda" it is, unfortunately, far from clear at this juncture how this integration would be achieved.

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

Putting aside the overall goal of people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information societies the WSIS has made progress in particular areas.

The WSIS Action Lines have helped draw attention to the role that ICTs can play in realizing development goals and the information society. There is no doubt that the WSIS and the WSIS Action Lines have, as the WSIS+10 HLE documents suggest, “helped in building a common understanding of the desirability to realize a truly global interconnected and inclusive Information Society. And that the implementation of those Action Lines has helped in drawing the attention to the crucial role the ICTs can play in many areas including reducing poverty and promoting literacy.” This can be seen in the substantive inputs into the Actions lines themselves, the various related analyses that have been undertaken and in the (albeit limited number of) WSIS+10 country reports. However, it is important not to overstate its impact. The reason for the development of ICTs and the Internet and the increasingly important role they have today is largely due to private sector investment, forward thinking governments committed to enabling environments, the work of the Internet technical community and other stakeholders that have contributed through capacity building, the promotion of local content and multilingualism and many other critical elements to making information societies a reality.

Other WSIS outcomes are Internet governance related. The Internet Governance Forum is now into the last year of its 2nd five year mandate. For all the constraints on its structure and purpose it has done remarkably well. It provides a unique space for the sharing of best practices and experience, for discussion and debate of Internet policy matters unburdened by negotiation and decision-taking, and for stakeholders to come together and assess upcoming issues of import. The IGF can do more, for example by seeking to better capture consensus on issues/challenges of import to policy-makers and influencers without producing “IGF recommendations.” The IGF, perhaps more so than any other forum or structure, has helped bridge the divides between stakeholders and has more than delivered on its purpose – a forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. The same cannot be said of the process towards enhanced cooperation. The debate as to what enhanced cooperation means continues to frustrate all stakeholders, despite the occasional finding of common purpose. It would be a shame, and a continuing distraction, if these same discussions were to be the core focus of any further round of the WSIS.

Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of the WSIS has been the recognition of the importance of multistakeholder approaches to governance. The Tunis Agenda puts this outcome into perspective when it states that “building an inclusive development-oriented Information Society will require unremitting multi-stakeholder effort. ... Taking into account the multifaceted nature of building the Information Society, effective cooperation among governments, private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other international organizations, according to their different roles and responsibilities and leveraging on their expertise, is essential.”

While some states may belittle multistakeholder approaches to governance, there is no doubt as to the importance of this evolving form of governance and its suitability to the era of the Internet and individual empowerment. This “rough consensus” on multistakeholder approaches to governance was best elaborated upon in the NETmundial outcomes document, which also outlined the importance of human rights to Internet governance and open and inclusive governance models. Much of the development of thriving ICTs and particularly the Internet around the globe has been due to favorable economic policies and stakeholders working together to empower people to learn, to trade, to create, to find community and to contribute online.

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

The answer is partially. Interestingly, some of the most important means of achieving a people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information society are those that were the subject of great divergence of opinion during the WSIS+10 review process hosted by the ITU. Terms such as good governance, freedom of expression, multi-stakeholderism and inclusiveness (as in the disadvantaged and disenfranchised) were debated and at times taken out in order to progress the texts. At the end of long negotiating days one could not help but wonder whether some of the participating governments were truly committed to the ideal of "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information societies."

As noted above, the role that the WSIS has had in drawing attention to, promoting and articulating the importance of ICTs to development and information societies has been invaluable. Taken as a whole, the WSIS outcomes, Action Lines and the WSIS HLE outcome documents also point to the importance of seeing ICTs and development more holistically. ICTs do not thrive in a vacuum. They require, among others: infrastructure that allows for widespread affordable access; social and political conditions that encourage people to use an open and available Internet; structures that enable people to take advantage of social, economic, and educational opportunities online; and governance models that are based on the rule of law and human rights and that support broader participation in shaping the future of the information society. Many of these key points are touched upon in the Actions Lines and WSIS+10 HLE outcome documents.

Q10: What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?

Some of the challenges are considerable. The WSIS+10 HLE outcomes document identified some 30 challenges. While each of the 30 is important, we highlight three that are central to addressing the others:

- The need to protect and reinforce all human rights, and to recognize their importance to realize economic and social development, ensuring equal respect for and enforcement of all human rights online and offline.
- More than half of the world's population is still not connected to the Internet, and therefore the information and communication infrastructure, capacity and local content development needs to continue to be addressed, especially in rural and remote areas.
- That greater efforts are still required to improve affordable access to ICTs, information and knowledge for all people, in particular in the developing countries and LDCs. There is also a need to ensure equity of access, including public access, in terms of human capacities and access to current and new ICTs, between urban and rural communities within countries and between countries around the world

We still face the fundamental challenges of protecting and promoting human rights, connectivity and access to information and knowledge. Without a better recognition of the importance human rights to economic and social development, without greater connectivity and without access to ICTs, information and knowledge, the very building blocks of people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information societies may prove elusive.

Another challenge to the WSIS outcomes and the Actions Lines is that many of the goals suggested in the WSIS+10 HLE documents necessitate fundamental changes to accepted and or existing governance models. States will debate the relative importance of good governance, an open Internet and human rights to development, despite research and the voices of experts. The results of the UN's A Million Voices report clearly indicate that good governance is a sine qua non for the realisation of the next round of development goals. Research by McKinsey and others has demonstrated the impact the Internet has had on economies, developing and developed alike, around the globe and the importance of it remaining an open and inclusive platform for innovation. Others note the importance of the realisation of human rights and the rule of law to development. The UN's special rapporteur Frank La Rue highlights the importance of the right to freedom expression and opinion as an enabler of other rights such as the right to education; he also notes that key role that the Internet can play as a facilitator of a range of rights.

Good governance, an open Internet and human rights and the rule of law are mutually dependent and reinforcing. An open Internet both enables and protects human rights, particularly the rights of freedom of expression and association. An open Internet becomes the medium of the people, providing a platform for discussion, debate and dissent. It encourages citizen engagement and stakeholder development. Without freedom of expression and the freedom of association citizens have no voice and cannot organize into communities of interest. Without them there is no there is no mechanism for collaborative or stakeholder based governance and policy development.

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

The WSIS+10 HLE outcome documents note that the “The most notable achievement of the current implementation of the WSIS Action lines is the participation and rising interest of all stakeholders, at the national, regional, and international levels, in jointly building and shaping the inclusive information society and raising awareness and overcoming the challenges that this process entails.” This important endorsement of multi-stakeholder approaches is echoed in the UNESCO WSIS+10 review final statement, where such approaches are seen as “essential in addressing issues affecting the knowledge and information societies” and their explicit encouragement is recommended. It will be important that the modalities for the overall WSIS+10 review in 2015 reflect these endorsements and the support that multi-stakeholder approaches have received from stakeholders around the globe, including governments, and from the participants in the WSIS+10 HLE. It would be very unfortunate – and contrary to the spirit and intent of the WSIS – for decision-making related to its future to be in the hands of governments alone.

We also recognize that multi-stakeholderism is not a panacea. Multi-stakeholderism is in its nascent stages as a governance model. It will evolve and undoubtedly there will be many different multi-stakeholder approaches dependent upon the policy space, the players and the type of policy decision-making that is required to achieve the anticipated goals. There is, however, no other governance approach that better reflects and builds upon the inherent openness and empowering nature of the Internet. As a result, and as noted above, it will become an increasingly important governance approach for realizing and expediting the development of information societies.

Q12: What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?

The WSIS+10 HLE outcomes documents recognize some of the important technology-related emerging trends and their impact:

“Several new trends have emerged in the inclusive Information Society such as broadband, social networks, mobility, digital inclusion, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and e-participation, amongst others. Many of these trends bring rapid innovation, diffusion and uptake of mobile technologies, as well as, improved access to ICTs, which has led to the great expansion of the gamut of opportunities that ICTs offer to promote inclusive and sustainable development.”

“With the rapid development of ICTs over the past ten years and the mainstreaming of ICTs into everyday life, the link between ICTs and human development is increasingly important.”

The emergence of new technologies is critical to economic and social development, as we have noted earlier in this questionnaire. However, as important as the new technologies and emerging trends are, it is equally if not more important to ensure that the legal and regulatory environments are such that new technologies have the ability to be discovered, that innovation can occur, that local content can be developed and that entrepreneurs can thrive. Ensuring that these conditions exist is a pressing challenge for all stakeholders.

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

While we recognize that all the priorities identified in the WSIS+10 HLE outcome documents are important to realizing information societies, we highlight the following (the first five of 36) as being essential:

- The need to protect and reinforce all human rights, and to recognize their importance to realize economic and social development, ensuring equal respect for and enforcement of all human rights online and offline.
- Encouraging and facilitating people-centered and inclusive governance models and mechanisms.
- Strengthening open, democratic, transparent and inclusive WSIS multistakeholder approach, enabling all stakeholders to participate according to their respective roles and responsibilities, in the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action.
- Ensuring a clear and direct link and an explicit connection between the key aim of the WSIS, that of harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies to promote and realize development goals, and the post 2015 development agenda, so as to contribute to the realisation of the latter.
- Expanding access to and use of ICTs to all, including broadband and mobile services, particularly to vulnerable and marginalised people who must have a variety of opportunities to strengthen their social position through ICTs and eservices, through continued and increasing practical measures of inclusion, while at the same time taking steps to enhance trust in the use of ICTs.

Additionally, in our initial comments to the WSIS+10 review we highlighted the UNGIS joint statement on the post 2015 development agenda, issued in May 2013, which noted that “the potential of ICTs as key enablers for inclusive development have yet to be fully acknowledged, harnessed and specifically linked to the achievement of all other MDG targets.” We agree with this assessment and believe that there has been insufficient emphasis in the WSIS review on key building blocks that could facilitate ICTs playing their important role in development. Some of these building blocks are touched upon later in the UNGIS statement: “ICTs by themselves cannot guarantee the achievement of development goals. Strategic policies, human capacity, appropriate knowledge management, relevant content development, infrastructure deployment, and an enabling environment are critical factors to ensure that the potential of ICTs for sustainable development is fully harnessed by and for all.”

We believe that these “critical factors” – or building blocks – include, among others:

- Protecting, respecting and promoting human rights and recognition of their importance to realizing economic and social development;
- Establishing enabling environments that will facilitate economic and social development on a foundation of human rights and the rule of law
- Building models of governance at national, regional, and international levels that are open, transparent, and inclusive, and encourage multistakeholder participation in policy development and decision-making;
- Ensuring that the Internet remains open, unconstrained by technology mandates and burdensome regulation, and free of limitations on what, when, and how users can communicate, access information, and build community.

All of the above are essential to realizing a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society for all, to ensuring continued economic and social development, and to realizing the goals of the post-2015 Development Agenda. We are pleased to see that a number of the points in Action C6 on the Enabling Environment in the furthering the Action Lines section of the WSIS+1 HLE outcome documents reflect the priorities we outline above.

Finally, we would like to re-emphasize the importance of the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum and the extension of its mandate to at least 10 years. The IGF has proven itself invaluable to progressing discussions on a diversity of important Internet and ICT related policy challenges and issues, is supported by an growing number of actors across all stakeholder groupings, and will be central tool to bringing the Internet and ICTs and the SDGs together to explore best practices and to develop thought leadership in their implementation.

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

ICTs and the Internet are central to development. The WSIS+10 HLE outcome documents note the importance of ICTs to the post-2015 development agenda: “We recognize The need for ensuring proper integration of the WSIS and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.” And “...it is necessary to consider the development of the inclusive information society in the broader context of the post-2015 development agenda.” But most importantly:

“ICTs will play a critical role in achieving the sustainable development goals. Taking into account the ongoing dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (MDG review process) and the WSIS implementation process, all stakeholders have indicated the necessity of increased interaction between both processes in order to ensure that efforts across the UN System are coherent and coordinated to achieve maximum and sustainable impact.”

There is no doubt that the majority of stakeholders (and certainly CDT) involved in the WSIS+10 review pointed to the importance of ICTs to the post-2015 development agenda, and the need for linkages between the WSIS and the SDGs. However, as we have noted earlier, this recognition is not addressed to date – there are very few references to ICTs in the SDGs and there are no apparent linkages between the WSIS+10 priorities and the SDGs. While not identified as one of the challenges to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, clear and demonstrable linkages to the SDGs are needed otherwise the importance of achieving people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information societies will lose its relevance to – and visibility in – the broader post-2015 development agenda. Anchoring the WSIS priorities – and the importance of the Internet and ICTs more generally – in the SDGs would bring back a long overdue focus on the central role that the Internet and ICTs play in economic and social development.

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

Respondent skipped this question

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

Respondent skipped this question