

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS  
outcomes**

Submitted by

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**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?**

Within ITC’s mandate we focus on aspects of the Information Society which relate to improving access to trade, ensuring inclusivity of opportunities and sustainability in the manner in which trade is enabled by new ICT tools and networks. ITC is active in the deployment of Web marketing, e-commerce and mobile solutions benefiting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and trade-support institutions in developing countries through training, advisory services and customizable products. The agency works with local stakeholders to adapt technologies to local requirements. ITC promotes the usage of ICTs for trade development through its trade-related technical-assistance projects.

The “digital economy” is now one of the main factors driving world trade. Digital channels are dominant in how businesses trade with one another. Complex “Global Value Chains” are linked together by information flows that coordinate trade in intermediate goods and services: estimated to be as much as 80% of world trade. Business to consumer e-commerce is a smaller but increasingly powerful distribution channel (now in excess of \$1 trillion per annum) which is changing the nature of retailing in developed countries, and creating new consumer markets in poor countries.

The tremendous opportunities offered by these new technologies are not equally open to all. Barriers of access include awareness, education and favourable legal and institutional environments as well as the availability of adequate hardware and telecommunications. While many governments have developed and implemented national ICT strategies more needs to be done to support training and access to digital tools in the developing world. ITC focuses on helping SMEs in developing and least developed countries overcome many of these barriers through tailored training and practical support in the implementation of digital tools and e commerce.

**How far do you consider the specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?**

ITC has worked within the Action line C7-E-business, which had 3 targeted outcomes:

- “Governments, international organizations and the private sector, are encouraged to promote the benefits of international trade and the use of e-business and promote the use of e-business models in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
- Through the adoption of an enabling environment, and based on widely available Internet access, governments should seek to stimulate private sector investment, foster new applications, content development and public/private partnerships
- Government policies should favour assistance to, and growth of SMMEs, in the ICT industry, as well as their entry into e-business, to stimulate economic growth and job creation as an element of a strategy for poverty reduction through wealth creation”

We attach the 10 year report made in association with our co-facilitators for the C7 E-Business action line, UNCTAD and UPU earlier in 2014.

“The extent to which enterprises are able to benefit from E-business still varies considerably. There is still a significant divide in developing countries between large and small companies, between enterprises in different industries and between rural and urban enterprises. The

ability to benefit from new innovations, such as cloud computing, varies according to a number of factors. Further improvements in the ICT infrastructure remains a key challenge for reducing the digital divide (between as well as within countries). Other critical factors include education and skills development, enhanced awareness of opportunities created by E-business, up to date and consistent regulatory and legal frameworks, and other related enabling policies.

At the same time, the scope for making E-business more inclusive has been greatly enhanced in the past few years, notably as a consequence of the mobile revolution. New, more user-friendly and affordable applications are rapidly spreading in countries at all levels of development. The international community has a shared responsibility in making sure that as many enterprises as possible have a fair chance of reaping the benefits from these trends. In order to seize these opportunities, effective partnerships between governments, development partners, the private sector and civil society are crucial."

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

The new technologies that have appeared since what was referred to as "Web 2.0" ten years ago have been based on participative forms of content creation and exchange. Largely created outside the sphere of government policy and driven by the private sector, social media and e commerce platforms have had a major impact on connecting communities and permitting international trade. These technologies are increasingly "people centred" in the sense that networks of individuals provide advice, expertise and access to goods and services that were formerly the unique preserve of formal enterprises. So in a sense, these technologies and networks driven by the private sector are inherently people centred.

ITC seeks to ensure that the new technologies have both inclusive and development related outcomes by working with groups of SME's and trade support institutions to train and advise on the use of digital tools and networks. An increasing focus of our work is on support offered to women's groups and toward youth oriented projects.

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

Many of the barriers to adoption of the new communication tools as a successful channel for business development reside in areas outside of the technology: barriers to trade block the development of e commerce related business just as successfully as traditional forms of trade. In addition new barriers, such as the availability of online payment solutions and adequate logistics networks can leave poor communities excluded from participating in digital trade.

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

In order to stimulate the development of digital trade in poor countries, ITC works with local partners to raise awareness about the potential of the new media, trains on the tools and platforms

that can be used to trade internationally and supports small enterprises to overcome some of the barriers to trading digitally, such as opening online payment solutions.

**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?**

Cloud based solutions have opened up new possibilities to access leading edge technologies for free or at a very low initial cost, enabling enterprises in least developed countries to leverage tools for higher productivity and competitiveness. Examples include virtual market places where goods and services can be bought and sold: a far greater variety than 10 years ago, enabling individuals and small companies to access intermediate goods and services and in turn sell their own value added products into world markets. The development and growth of Global Value Chains in many sectors of production is both a major challenge and opportunity for the development of LDCs'

**What should be the priority of stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?**

Vital to include the private sector, including large multinational corporations and a consideration of Global Value Chains to understand the rapidly evolving global economy. The entrepreneurial motivation of small, medium and large businesses around the world has had the most significant impact on the adoption and successful utilisation of ICTs.

**What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post 2015 agenda?**

ICT's will continue to have a radical transformative effect on the lives of individuals around the world. The challenge for the development community is to adopt an analogous form of entrepreneurial zeal to that shown by the private sector in innovating digital business toward accelerating implementation of solutions to world's biggest challenges. ICT's can be revolutionary in their ability to target and monitor efficiency in the allocation of resources. In seeking to address challenges related to poverty, sickness and environmental sustainability, digital tools and networks will be the foundation on which innovative new approaches can be built. Examples include massively extending the reach of training and education programmes, targeting health resources and in extending access to international markets to even the most isolated communities.