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

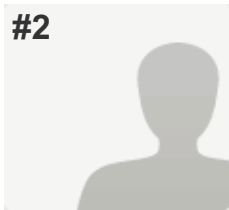# Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes

Submitted by

MR. JOHN LAPRISE

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Q1: Salutation: Mr.

Q2: First Name, Surname: John Laprise

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Q3: Organisation: Northwestern University

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Q4: Country: United States

Q6: Which stakeholder category do you belong to?   Technical or Academic Community

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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?

It has developed considerably. However, states continue to resist ferociously the diminishment of their authority and every victory for inclusiveness is the result of hard battles and staunch defense on the part of civil society.

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

Minimally. The objectives are slowly disseminating but many states give only lip service to the principles.

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

Unevenly globally. Much depends on the structure of national governments and their confidence in their respective populations. Authoritarian regimes resist and weak governments are uncertain.

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"?

State power is the biggest hindrance to WSIS outcomes. Diminishing sovereignty and the granting of quasi-sovereignty to non-state actors are outcomes that states fight at every opportunity. A second challenge is the constant battle between content and architecture camps. This is played out most clearly in discussions of network neutrality.

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

Constant pressure by civil society and the commercial sector is the only effective remedy. Over time, such actors have the power to influence change.

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 internet of things and the use of large data sets have dramatically changed the playing field for WSIS outcomes. Their implications for human rights were largely unenvisioned and are still being sorted out. The biggest single future technological change will be the availability of non-terrestrial global broadband which will effectively circumvent national technologies for blocking content.

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

States need to get out of the way. They are not agile and their established means of arriving at consensus slow down their decision making process and enable technological innovation to outpace policy making. They threaten themselves with obsolescence.

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

ICT is essential for development. In developed countries, one would not even think of starting a business wholly offline. If a developing country wants to participate in the global economy, being offline is almost a guarantor of failure.

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

Civil society's greatest challenge going forward is the development of community so that they might originate and advance policy independent of commercial and state interests.

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