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(CSTD)**

**Twenty-second session
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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on
their efforts in 2018 to implement the outcome of the WSIS**

Submission by

Association for Progressive Communications

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 22nd session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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| <p>DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.</p> |
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Re: Inputs for the CSTD WSIS Progress Report 2018

Please find here our inputs towards the elaboration of the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on WSIS outcomes as per the resolution “Flow of Information for the Follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society”.

With over 60 member NGOs in more than 40 countries working for the last 28 years in most of the areas related to the WSIS goals, APC's activities in support of the WSIS action lines and themes are many and diverse; a) promoting universal access to ICTs, b) supporting rights-based, inclusive ICT related policies, particularly for women, the poor and other marginalised communities in the developing world; and c) promoting inclusive, transparent, multi-stakeholder and accountable internet governance.

In this respect APC's post-WSIS related activities are focused on: affordable internet access for all; defending human rights in the internet sphere, particularly in support of freedom of expression and protection of privacy and understanding the relationship between internet access and economic, social and cultural rights; securing gender equality and women's rights, particularly in relation to ending violence against women; ICT-use which sustains the environment; use of emerging technologies for social change; building the “information commons”; and improving governance, especially internet governance. To support these goals, APC engages over five interrelated areas: research, advocacy, network building, capacity development and strategic communications and outreach. This approach, combined with our long standing prioritisation of linking 'practice' to policy advocacy, and linking local to regional and global activities through our network of national and programme members and partners, puts APC in a unique position to provide inputs for the development of the post-WSIS agenda.

Sincerely,

Mike Jensen
Communication and Information Policy Programme (CIPP)
Association for Progressive Communications

1. Trends and experiences in implementation at national, regional and international levels around the key issues APC works with

Political trends

In the current political climate, the power of the internet as a tool for public participation, democratisation and collaboration is critically needed, yet this power is being undermined as well as hijacked by anti-democratic interests and actors. There is a wave of conservative, authoritarian leaders and regimes in many countries who are actively eroding fundamental human rights and encouraging intolerance. Media independence and space for dissent and civil society activity are under threat around the world. The exploitation of data to drive electoral outcomes – and the weaponising of information during election campaigns continue to undermine trust in institutions and the integrity of electoral processes. Considering how vital online spaces are to both mainstream and citizen journalism, to political participation, and to social movements, non-governmental organisations and broader civil society, these trends should feature high on the list among the concerns addressed by the various global policy spaces such as CSTD and WSIS.

Access

Almost half the world still remain unconnected and the majority of those with internet access only have access via unaffordable mobile connections with metered usage fees. Of particular concern in 2018 are the emergence of assessments from ITU and industry body GSMA that growth in the number of connected people is slowing significantly, and will only reach about 60% of the world's population by 2025. Attention continues to be focussed on 4G and 5G network deployments by mobile operators, as well as a number of 'connect the next billion' initiatives. Media focus is on those which plan to launch thousands of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, blimps, and other high altitude platforms. However these often do not take into account existing constraints on better access created by barriers in the policy and regulatory environment which continue to restrict or limit innovative solutions to connectivity issues. While advanced satellite and other high altitude systems offer potential connectivity solutions for isolated areas, especially if the costs can be recovered elsewhere, these new projects need not distract from the existing potential today, for rural communities to build their own local access infrastructure using wireless and even fibre technology. As was observed at the 2018 WSIS Forum, if the policy and regulatory environment is made more conducive, community networks offer a strong potential prospect for the next billion to simply connect themselves.

Achieving a better understanding of and support for community networks has become a key area of activity for APC in addressing needs in the access ecosystem. APC and its partners continued to work intensively during 2018 on community networks¹ as a means for empowering people to build and manage their own access solutions. The potential role of community networks has gained recognition this year as reflected in a variety of activities at different levels, from national (e.g. licence exemption for community networks in Argentina) to international (e.g. workshops^{2 3} and intervention in the High Level Track⁴ at the 2018 World Summit on the Information Society Forum and inclusion of community networks as an “emerging topic” in a resolution adopted by the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development)^{5 6}, as well as in draft texts being debated at the ITU Plenipotentiary. There have also been technology developments of value to community networks, such as progress with a powerful mesh wireless device, the LibreRouter,⁷ and

¹ <https://www.apc.org/en/taxonomy/term/5460>

² From the last to first mile: Community networks”

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2018/Pages/Agenda/Session/114#intro>

³ “Community networks: How the unconnected connect themselves”:

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2018/Pages/Agenda/Session/143#intro>

⁴

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2018/Files/documents/outcomes/WSISForum2018_HighLevelTrackOutcomes.pdf

⁵ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34881>

⁶ https://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/E_res_2018_28_en.pdf

⁷ <https://librerouter.org>

HERMES,⁸ a project to use high-frequency (HF band) radio frequencies to interconnect GSM base stations. Community networks have been discussed at three important regional IGFs – the Latin American,⁹ Africa and Asia. In the last year, APC has held and/or participated in dedicated workshops on community networks with regional policy and regulatory bodies,¹⁰ namely the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), the African Union Commission, East African Communications Organization and the Communications Regulatory Authority of Southern Africa.

Human Rights on the internet

2018 has seen both advances and threats to the enjoyment of human rights online. Smart regulation, developed with inputs from different stakeholders, can safeguard individual rights, such as the right to privacy in the case of the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).¹¹ However national legislation emerging in many parts of the world is aimed at regulating the internet in ways that compromise rights online, failing to meet either national constitutional guarantees or international standards, especially in relation to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Examples include Egypt,¹² India,¹³ Pakistan,¹⁴ and Bangladesh.¹⁵ The special areas of concern for APC are:

- **Legislating restrictions to human rights online:** Laws, together with extra legal measures, have led to increasing restriction of space for civil society to develop and operate, with human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, sexual rights defenders and LGBTIQ activists, journalists, artists and others subject to arrest, censorship, and hate online, which ultimately compromises their security offline.
- **Platform responsibility and accountability:** Increasing intervention by private platform providers in the free flow of information on the internet (in particular social networks, messaging services and search engines), with negative impacts on freedom of expression through direct restrictions (censorship by removal or blocking, including automatic filtering) and restrictions of legitimate content.¹⁶ This highlights the need companies comply with international human rights law and ensure transparency, accountability and due process in their content moderation practices. APC's position is that companies should use human rights law as the authoritative global standard for ensuring freedom of expression and other rights on their platforms, not the varying laws of states or their own private interests.
- **Algorithmic decision making and the right to explanation:** As the use of algorithms is increasingly finding its way into different aspects of our lives, it is critical to examine the problems posed from a human rights perspective by automated or algorithmic decision making. Algorithmic decision making¹⁷ impacts a range of rights, from freedom of expression to the right to work, and has already demonstrated its ability to extend discrimination and deepen inequality.

Cybersecurity

Public awareness of the need for greater security is increasing with more frequent data breaches. The internet governance sector is ridden by intense debate on how, and where, to deal with the issue. APC's view is that a secure internet is best achieved through a rights-based approach and must centre on the security of users as opposed to the security of states. Cybersecurity practices, policies and strategies should place human rights at the centre and not treat cybersecurity and human rights as inherently at odds with each other. The

⁸ <https://www.rhizomatica.org/hermes>

⁹ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34821>

¹⁰ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34747>

¹¹ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34716>

¹² <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34884>

¹³ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34254>

¹⁴ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/33972>

¹⁵ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34342>

¹⁶ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34904>

¹⁷ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/35168>

recommendations¹⁸ that emerged from this event were published earlier this year and contain suggestions that can be used by different processes, such as the WSIS.

Internet governance:

A major development within the UN on internet governance was the establishment of the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. APC coordinated a joint open letter outlining concerns with the establishment of the Panel and proposing some ideas for how it should operate, as well as topics for its attention.¹⁹ The letter was well received by the Secretariat as well as Panel members, who said as a result the content of APC's letter was discussed during the Panel's first meeting in September.

2. Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes.

Measuring a free, open, rights-based and inclusive internet: The UNESCO Internet Universality Indicators aim to measure to what extent the ROAM (rights-openness-access-multistakeholder) principles are applied at national levels in relationship with cross-cutting indicators on gender and the needs of children and young people, sustainable development, trust and security, and legal and ethical concerns. They are designed to facilitate learning and country-level discussion among stakeholders on how to improve "internet universality". It is a very positive step forward that this tool was launched at the Paris IGF and recently approved at the 31st session of the IPDC (International Programme for Development of Communication) Council.^{20 21}

Access:

- Methodology for gathering data designed and applied to 9 community network field missions in Africa, Asia and Latin America (India, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Uganda, DRC, Thailand, Indonesia and Mexico) which aims to identify the factors and dynamics that hinder unconnected communities from connecting themselves.
- Engagement with regional regulatory bodies in workshops and interviews in Latin America ^ Africa.
- Organisation of sessions/events about local access in major conferences (World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), re:publica, regional Internet Governance Forums (IGF)), and participation as speakers in more than 30 events.
- Four new community networks deployed in Colombia and Brazil. Development of technology to backhaul GSM traffic and SMS over High Frequency (HF) radio.
- The 2018 edition of APC's annual Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch)²² report dedicated to community networks, launched in the framework of the 2018 IGF with 43 country reports.
- APC member Rhizomatica's work in support of the March 2018 at the VII Regular Meeting of the Assembly of CITELE, where the Internet Society (ISOC) and CITELE agreed to focus on the participation of community networks in bridging the digital divide in the Americas region.
- CITELE Report on implementation of Recommendation ITU-D 19 (which recommends governments to create an enabling environment for community-owned networks) in the LAC region.²³
- Several submissions to policy process in South Africa^{24 25}, to urge the government to implement their public statements in support of community networks²⁶.

¹⁸ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34804>

¹⁹ <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/open-letter-establishment-un-secretary-generals-high-level-panel-digital-cooperation>

²⁰ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-of-5-measuring-a-free-open-rights-based-and-inclusive-internet>

²¹ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/35149>

²² <https://www.giswatch.org/community-networks>

²³ <https://www.redesac.org.mx/regulacion>

²⁴ https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Zenzeleni_APC_UWC_Submission_ECAA_2017.pdf

²⁵ https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Submission_on_proposed_policy_on_licensing_unassigned_high_demand_spectrum_and_deployment_of_the_WOAN.pdf

- Report launched to urge regulators and policy makers to implement innovative spectrum management mechanisms to support small operators and community networks²⁷.

Human rights:

- A GenderIT edition on public and legal recognition of online gender-based violence provides an in depth timeline of achievements, issues and challenges ahead.
- A Regional Convening “Making a feminist internet: End online gender-based violence, sustain the movement”, was held in Belgrade in October with participants from Central and eastern Europe.
- The Feminist Tech Exchange - continues as network, a training curriculum and a network of trainers who work with women’s rights and sexual rights activists to use the internet safely, which enables trainers to work with communities to engage technology with pleasure, creativity and curiosity.
- A Toolkit to research access and gender was developed in collaboration w/ GSMA and the Alliance for Affordable Internet, and the World Wide Web Foundation which provides a guide for researchers to collect accurate data on women’s and men’s internet access and develop a fuller global picture of the digital gender gap²⁸.
- APC’s member organisation BlueLink²⁹ continued in 2018 producing stories on human rights, women, migration, asylum seekers, refugee rights and gender rights through its pioneering virtual newsroom and publishing in-depth journalistic articles on those issues in Bulgarian and in English in the regional e-magazine for Central and Eastern Europe BlueLink Stories.³⁰ BlueLink is also helping civil society organizations and citizens to avoid, withstand and overcome hate speech and other forms of online pressure within the project “Free Speech v.s Hate Speech: Online security for environmental, gender and human rights activists in Bulgaria”.

Governance:

- Action Steps: A decade of civil society advocacy in the information society - A baseline review of the Global Information Society Watch country reports (2007-2017).³¹ The purpose of this publication is to look back over the past decade of country reports published in Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) and attempt to identify trends in civil society perspectives on what needed to be done to create a people-centred information society.
- The sixth African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) was held from 11-16 October 2018 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The 55 participants were made up of 34 fellows from all over Africa and 21 faculty. Of the 34 fellows 20 were women.³² This year the practicum was focused on the impact of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Africa.
- APC participated actively in regional IGFs in Asia Pacific, LAC and Africa as co-organisers, members of multistakeholder steering committees and in organising sessions and workshops.
- APC participates in several BPFs including gender and access, APC participates in the BPF on Cybersecurity,³³ community networks, and others. We continue to co-chair the working group of the MAG on IGF improvements, which completed an initial review of the status of recommendations made for strengthening the IGF and submitted its report to the MAG Chair.

²⁶ <https://www.apc.org/en/node/34705>

²⁷ <https://isoc.app.box.com/s/ml7ipqpu32pxe4ps97eg70ao2yc32sri>

²⁸ <https://www.apc.org/en/news/new-toolkit-researching-womens-internet-access-and-use>

²⁹ <http://www.bluelink.net/en>

³⁰ <http://bluelink.info/>

³¹ <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/action-steps-decade-civil-society-advocacy-information-society-baseline-review-global>

³² <https://afrisig.org/afrisig-2018/>

³³ <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/contribution-apc-2018-internet-governance-forum-best-practice-forum-cybersecurity>

In addition, APC's work and inputs contributed to the following developments:

- UNGA passed a resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age (A/C.3/73/L.49/Rev.1) which includes new focus on the gender dimensions of privacy violations, particularly pernicious forms of surveillance, such as government hacking and intelligence sharing, the need to protect privacy when processing biometric information, and the impact of artificial intelligence on the right to privacy.
- The HRC passed a number of resolutions that contribute to the advancement of human rights standards online, including resolutions 38/7 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet, 38/5 on Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts, and 38/11 on The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests, among others.
- The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Procedures released a number of important reports on issues related to WSIS implementation, such as the report of OHCHR on the right to privacy in the digital age, the report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women on Online violence against women and girls, and the report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression on content moderation.
- Human Rights Mechanisms: International human rights mechanisms (treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review) continued to provide recommendations to improve national level internet -related policies in order to comply with international human rights standards (for example in Bangladesh, Cameroon, and South Africa)

3. Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above.

Ensuring better ICT access ultimately depends on important policy decisions to ensure there is a sufficiently enabling ecosystem for small scale and bottom up access provision, and this will require public consultation and input from civil society, the technical community, and others with experience in addressing connectivity and access issues.

APC has been consistently committed to the development of the Internet governance forum (IGF) since its creation and continues seeing it as the most important international policy area aimed at improving the governance of the internet. We commit to strengthening, deepening, improving multistakeholder approaches to IG, capacity building around IG, facilitating the participation of different movements and communities (especially from the global south) in IG processes.

We also commit to increasing the awareness of the potential of innovative technology and institutional models for helping the unconnected connect themselves, and to build the capacity of those working to support these initiatives.

Finally, we commit to expand our human rights work by reinforcing their realisation supported by access and use of the internet through empowering and increasing capacities in civil society actors to monitor, analyse and advocate towards holding governments and companies accountable for their commitments. Similarly, we commit to continue strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations and activists to effectively use human rights mechanisms and instruments to advance human rights online.

Below, we provide some examples of the type of interventions we will focus on:

- Application on the Internet Universality Indicators to assess the status of internet policy at national levels and address the complexity of the online sphere towards improving policy making to foster internet development.
- Global Information Society Watch 2019 with a focus on civil society critical and alternative perspectives about algorithmic decision making and artificial intelligence.

- Building on APC's existing local access-related work implemented in 2018, we will contribute in the next year to foster an enabling ecosystem for the emergence and growth of
- community networks and other community-based connectivity initiatives in developing countries through peer learning and exchange, awareness raising and capacity building, scalable innovative and sustainable networks, and contributing to the development of an enabling policy and regulatory environment. We will adopt human rights-based and gender equality approaches, with a special emphasis on women-led initiatives and integration of a gender perspective.
- Building on previous work, we will challenge hate narratives and violations of freedom of religion and expression online in South and Southeast Asia to contribute to open space for expression on the internet that is secular, inclusive and enabling of diverse perspectives relating to religion or belief.
- Building the capacity of civil society and other stakeholders in Africa to use the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Principles in policy development and responding to internet-related human rights violations.
- With gender and human rights perspectives, building and strengthening the capacity and knowledge among a diverse range of actors in Africa for a more effective engagement with internet governance processes and issues nationally, regionally and globally, through the African School on Internet Governance.
- Expanding on the work to engage with internet intermediaries / corporations to develop HR based responses to online GBV that are responsive to a diverse range of technology users
- Developing a policy toolkit that translates the Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPIs) into something that is useful / supports policy-advocacy work on sexuality, gender and rights, regionally as well as nationally through the work of our members and partners
- EroTICS Survey - continue to explore the emerging issues on sexuality and the internet in South Asia and Globally with multilingual survey on surveillance, dataveillance, censorship and "morality" blanket to silence LGBTIQ and GNC activists
- Developing the Feminist Internet Research Network as part of a feminist internet as critical to bring about transformation in gendered structures of power that exist online and onground. It will undertake data-driven research that provides substantial evidence to drive change in policy and law and in discourse around internet rights.