

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

**Twenty-third session  
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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international  
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2019 to  
implement the outcomes 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.

**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.

**Highlights from the Association for Progressive Communications for the UN Secretary-General's annual reports on WSIS outcomes  
November, 2019**

**Response to the report of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation**

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and many of its member organisations participated in consultations on the High Level Panel's work during 2018 and we offer our congratulations on the report. We appreciate the openness of the Panel to input and the efforts that have been made by Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild and his staff to solicit responses. We agree that multilateralism and multistakeholderism are both necessary and can coexist. Both must be strengthened, and particular focus is needed to bring far more diverse voices to the table to ensure that such processes are inclusive and reflect the needs of those facing digital exclusion. Particular attention is needed to include voices from developing countries and traditionally marginalised people and groups, women, youth, indigenous people, religious and ethnic minorities, rural populations and older people. We value that the report emphasises that cooperation must be grounded in common human values – such as inclusiveness, respect, human-centredness, human rights, international law, transparency and sustainability. We fully support the holistic approach to digital inclusion and agree that effective digital cooperation requires multilateralism to be strengthened and complemented by multistakeholder approaches.

[https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/APC\\_response\\_to\\_HLPDC\\_report\\_November\\_2019.pdf](https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/APC_response_to_HLPDC_report_November_2019.pdf)

**Research report "Bottom-up Connectivity Strategies: Community-led small-scale telecommunication infrastructure networks in the global South"**

There is increasing concern over the worldwide slowdown in the growth of voice and internet users. The networks being deployed by national operators are now only expected to connect 60% to 70% of the world's population by 2025. This indicates that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which anticipate attaining universal connectivity by 2030, are unlikely to be achieved. Despite decades of deployment, it appears increasingly likely that current strategies will not be able to address the needs of billions of people in developing countries who have ineffective communication services due to limited coverage or lack of affordable services. Fortunately, however, network equipment continues to become more affordable and easier to deploy, resulting in increasing numbers of networks emerging where community members build and operate their own telecommunication infrastructure, often managed on a cost-recovery basis, rather than for commercial gain. To document the benefits of, and challenges facing, small-scale, community-based connectivity projects, APC researchers conducted field studies in 2018 and published the research report entitled "Bottom-up Connectivity Strategies: Community-led small-scale telecommunication infrastructure networks in the global South" in 2019. The primary goal of the research was to provide information that can be used for evidence-based policy making that will contribute to creating a more enabling environment for small community-based local access networks. In addition, the research aimed to identify opportunities for these networks to be more effective and, hopefully, to encourage more organisations to support the development of these networks in future.

<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/bottom-connectivity-strategies-community-led-small-scale-telecommunication-infrastructure>

**Paper "Innovations in Spectrum Management - Enabling community networks and small operators to connect the unconnected"**

The value of being connected to a communication network is steadily rising. And yet, half of the world population remains unconnected to the Internet. Traditional solutions are showing signs of having reached their limits. Attempts to address this problem, whether through universal service

strategies/funds, private sector initiatives or philanthropy, have met with limited success. This presents a conundrum for policy-makers and regulators where value continues to accrue to those with affordable access to communication infrastructure while the unconnected fall further and further behind by simply staying in the same place.

In order to address this issue, fresh thinking is required. This report developed by APC and ISOC is intended as a resource for regulators and policy makers tasked with addressing affordable access. This paper begins by providing new lenses to understand the vocabulary, the framework, and the current landscape for spectrum management.

<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/innovations-spectrum-management-enabling-community-networks-and-small-operators-connect>

### **Global Society Information Watch report 2019 on “Artificial intelligence: Human rights, social justice and development”**

The conversation on AI has so far been driven largely by Western and global North perspectives. However, the assumptions, values, incentives, and socioeconomic environments within which AI technologies function vary greatly across jurisdictions. There is no single metric that can be applied to understand properly the successes, pitfalls and effects of AI on societies across the world. The questions remain: what specific and unique issues arise in different contexts? How can we make the conversation around AI more global and inclusive from the outset? What are the human rights implications of the application of AI in specific contexts, with an emphasis on the global South? In order to contribute to address those questions, APC and Article 19 collaborated in the 2019 edition of GISW.

[https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Sneak\\_Peek\\_GISWatch\\_2019.pdf](https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Sneak_Peek_GISWatch_2019.pdf)

<https://www.giswatch.org/> (the full edition will be available online on Nov 28th, 2019)

### **Issue paper "Online content: To regulate or not to regulate – is that the question?"**

Recently there have been a flurry of proposals to “regulate the internet”, which in practice boils down to more narrowly regulating online content. These proposals often emerge after high-profile revelations related to the role of online intermediaries in facilitating access to illegal or undefined harmful content. In order to suggest a principles-based approach to regulation, this issue paper highlights positive and negative aspects of some recent initiatives to regulate online content, in one form or another – namely the European Union (EU) code of conduct on hate speech, the EU’s reform of its audiovisual media rules, the German NetzDG law, the French approach to co-regulating social media with platforms like Facebook, and the UK online harms paper. It recommends moving towards a process-based co-regulatory approach to online content regulation, which does not make platforms liable for hosting individual pieces of content, but instead imposes a legal obligation on them to fully disclose their self-regulatory efforts to address illegal and harmful content on their services. Such disclosures should be combined with mandatory oversight by an independent regulator in order to allow for independent scrutiny of the necessity, proportionality and effectiveness of these measures.

<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/online-content-regulate-or-not-regulate-question>