**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twentieth session**
Geneva, 8-12 May 2017

High-level roundtable on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes at the regional and international levels"

Statement submitted by

Mr. Guy Berger
Director of Freedom of Expression and Media Development Division
in the Communication and Information Sector
UNESCO

Monday, 8 May 2017

High-level roundtable on "Review of progress made in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes"

Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Twentieth session, (8-12 May 2017), Geneva

Remarks by Guy Berger, director for Freedom of Expression and Media Development, UNESCO.

1. For the purposes of this presentation, I will highlight the relevance of the Sustainable Development (SDG) Goal 16 for UNESCO in aligning our WSIS activity to the 2030 Development Agenda, and how this alignment relates to the question of unleashing the innovative approaches that are needed in order to achieve the SDGs..

2. For UNESCO, achieving the SDGs needs information, knowledge and communications. ICTS are a means to this. Without these inputs, societies will struggle to find and assess the shortest route to the 2030 Development Agenda.

3. Goal SDG 16 does recognise the importance of informational conditions for the SDGs. Hence, the target 16.10: "public access to information and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements." We could not agree more with this, and we also signal its synergy with SDG 9's reference to innovation – as I will highlight as this presentation proceeds.

4. To assess progress on Target 16.10, the UN Statistics Commission has agreed on - amongst other Indicators - number 16.10.2, which is: ""Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information." UNESCO has been designated convening agency in the UN for global reporting on this indicator. As such, we have revised our work to cater for this, have developed innovative data-partnerships with a range of actors, and have now twice submitted findings to the UN Secretary General's reporting on this issue. Our findings so far: there

is welcome progress… but still very much to be done, and certainly if this target is to play its part in fuelling innovation to optimum levels.

5. Monitoring indicator 16.10.2 gives new and added significance to our support for freedom of information laws, and also to 28 September, proclaimed in 2015 by the 195 Member States of UNESCO as International Day for Universal Access to Information. The creation of this new day on the calendar is catalysing commemorations around the world - including innovative UNESCO events titled "IPDCtalks" to show the link between access to information and what is needed for these to help us achieve each individual SDG. We encourage stakeholders worldwide to be creative in taking up this day as an excellent opportunity to focus attention – such as on innovative approaches in the interests of achieving the SDGs.

6. I turn now to a broader point: if WSIS is to maximise the value of its Informational emphasis for development, how can this be hastened by, and contribute to, new innovative approaches in ICTs, information, knowledge and communications?

7. UNESCO is responding to this challenge in many ways. For brevity's sake, I will mention just one over-arching initiative here: our recent introduction of the concept of Internet Universality.

8. When our 195 Member States endorsed the concept of "Internet Universality" at the end of 2015, they proposed that an Internet for all would depend on the extent to which we can shape this network according to the principles of Rights, Openness, Accessibility and Multistakeholder participation. These principles are conveniently abbreviated as **ROAM**.

9. It is our view that ROAM is what can enable the Internet to best contribute to achieving all SDGs. If you think about it, an Internet that does not respect rights is not conducive to the kind of sustainable development with fundamental freedoms as envisioned in the SDGS. But even an Internet of rights is not that helpful to persons who are excluded for one reason or another. And without Openness and Multi-stakeholder participation, we simply would not have the Internet today.

10. Let me briefly explain how this package of principles is key if we are to enable new innovation approaches that contribute to achieving the SDGs.

11. First, the issue of **Rights** is key.[1] Take for example the issue of respect for the right to freedom of expression, which incorporates the rights to press freedom as well as freedom of information. Too often, this package is compromised around the world by overly restrictive laws which curb wholly legitimate flows of information. For instance, controls over media which are neither necessary nor proportional in terms of international standards, constitute a significant barrier to the free flow of information and the absence of unessential constraints as are needed for innovation to flourish.[2] Freedom of connection – in contrast to the increasingly common phenomenon of Internet cut-offs – is a sine qua non if a society wishes to guarantee the most basic enabling condition for ICT innovation for development.[3]

12. Further on the topic of freedom of expression, let me recall that the WSIS+10 Review Outcome Document noted with concern "that there are serious threats to freedom of expression and plurality of information" and it called for the protection of journalists, media workers and civil society space". As the lead agency in the UN dealing with the safety of journalists, and leading the multistakeholder UN Plan of Action on this subject, UNESCO appreciates this deeply. We are pleased to be a contributing agency to indicator 16.10.1 which includes safety of journalists, as well as of human rights defenders, and trades

---

[1] As the WSIS +10 Review Outcome Document observes, progress under WSIS needs to be considered not only in terms of technology and economics, but "also as a function of progress with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms". At the same time, such respect is simultaneously also a factor for technical and economic progress, and innovation. The right to privacy, for instance, is key to guiding data-driven approaches that inspire trust and confidence, and avoid the stifling effects of surveillance overreach and big-data unaccountability.

[2] In this context, let me point specifically to the content of the hot-off-the-press World Press Freedom Day Jakarta Declaration adopted in Indonesia, which in turn builds upon the Finlandia Declaration and the Declaration of Riga of the previous two years global conferences on World Press Freedom Day. In this regard, UNESCO underlines the Outcome Document's call on States "to take all appropriate measures necessary to ensure the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and association and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, in accordance with their human rights obligations". Only by such an environment can we realistically have conditions in which innovative approaches can thrive.

[3] Addressing abusive uses of the Internet within the framework of human rights tests for legitimate limitations is strongly advocated by UNESCO, such as in our work in related to violent extremism.

unionists. For us, safety for free expression, is uncontestably critical for information flows that can fuel innovative approaches. In this regard, UNESCO and OHCHR will host a global consultation in Geneva on 29 June this year precisely to explore innovations that can strengthen the UN Plan of Action.

13. These points give you a glimpse into the issue of Rights online and their relevance for innovation towards the SDGs.

14. Second, moving onto **Openness**. It is self-evident that an Internet characterised predominantly by either closed or fragmented systems would be a drag on much innovation and would significantly cramp the sharing of good practices. On the contrary, interoperability and a strong presence of open software, open knowledge resources, and open markets that enable the entry of new players, are preconditions for continued innovation.

15. Third, **Accessibility** is fundamental for innovation.[4] What is clear is that digital divides based on affordability, inequalities in gender and language, social exclusion and other factors, serve to cut off key constituencies from the opportunities to contribute to, and benefit from, innovative approaches to development.[5]

16. It is also clear that accessibility needs policies to promote media and information literacy so that users can access and navigate the Internet without problems. When the Internet is a space where women are harassed, when minorities experience hate speech, when fake news is shared in bulk by bots and users, then it is evident that media and information literacy is needed. This empowerment is about how to recognise and counter such anti-developmental phenomena, so that cyberspace can be experienced as a place of opportunity and inspiration and not of threat and insult.[6]

---

[4] From a UNESCO point of view, this principle is also very much bound up with socio-economic rights.

[5] Since UNESCO has a crosscutting Priority for Gender Equality across all its activities, it was music to the ears for the 2015 WSIS Review Outcome Document to specifically acknowledge a gender divide as part of digital divides. This indeed is an issue that we continue to address in various avenues, including in our partnership with the ITU for the Broadband Commission. Given that our other cross-cutting Priority at UNESCO is Africa, and given our intense involvement with SIDS, we appreciate the acknowledgement of the importance of inclusion of these parts of the world in the Outcome Document.

[6] Further, of high significance to UNESCO is the Outcome Document's acknowledgement that: "that differences in individuals' capabilities to both use and create information and communications technologies represent a

17. To meet this urgent challenge, and to scale this vital work, we need to expand partnerships and experiment with innovative approaches. And we also need desperately need innovative approaches to strengthen media business models, and to promote inclusive journalism, if there is to be a viable common currency of reliable news in our information ecosystem. An interesting recent innovation was the Panama Papers multi-country exposé of often-illegally held offshore cash – something that is very important for the SDG on reducing inequality. We need more such innovative collaborations, such as in the field of monitoring climate change commitments under the COP 21 accord.

18. Besides UNESCO's work in such literacy, under the heading of accessibility I would also cite our championing of issues relating to disabled persons, the diversity of cultural expressions, and the importance of multi-lingualism in cyberspace.[7]

19. Lastly, the issue of **Multi-stakeholder partic**ipation is promoted by UNESCO as the essential modality for seeking to advance Rights, Openness and Accessibility, so that the Internet is shaped for optimum contribution to the SGDs. We know too that even individual innovators benefit from multi-stakeholder co-operation. UNESCO's work in promoting understanding of Multistakeholderism is extensive, [8] and I am pleased to reference here current research commissioned by UNESCO with support of ISOC and ICANN, a

---

knowledge divide that perpetuates inequality. UNESCO's work in mobile learning and its ICT competency framework for teachers is relevant here.

The Outcome Document notes to the ambition to move beyond "information societies" to "knowledge societies", in which information is not only created and disseminated, but put to the benefit of human development." Indeed the concept of knowledge societies was coined by UNESCO to highlight that the Information Society may be seen as a means towards a further end – the point being information is essential, but so too is the conversion of information into relevant knowledge. Our work on education in general, including education for global citizenship, and our media and information literacy work – which leads a 400 member global alliance – all amounts to a contribution to accessibility, and thence to innovation.

[7] The diversity of cultural expressions is self-evidently vital for innovation in regard to cultural industries.

[8] UNESCO has championed, and put into practice, multi-stakeholder modalities in advancing the information society, the value and principles of which were reaffirmed in the 2015 Outcome Document as "effective participation, partnership and cooperation of Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical and academic communities and all other relevant stakeholders, within their respective roles and responsibilities, especially with balanced representation from developing countries". The WSIS Outcome Document itself references the UNESCO multi-stakeholder review event "Towards knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development", held in February 2013, and the final statement of that initiative titled, "Information and knowledge for all: an expanded vision and a renewed commitment" - as well as UNESCO's co-organising the multi-stakeholder high level review event in June 2014 with ITU, UNCTAD and UNDP.

summary of which is available here, into the deeper dynamics of multi-stakeholder practice.

20. ROAM constitutes a frame of key normative principles for a policy approach for UNESCO, and indeed for other actors including governments and many other actors, to activities that relate to the Internet. They encourage us all to assess policies in terms of how they can impact on rights, openness and accessibility. And they encourage us to develop and evaluate these policies through participative modalities that benefit from the input of many diverse constituencies. The ROAM principles are foundations for a development environment characterised by a permanent practice of innovation.

21. Going further, UNESCO is now in the process of consultatively developing related indicators, by which it will be possible in a given society for stakeholders to have a systematic tool to research the state of ROAM in its area of jurisdiction. In turn, the results of such indicators-driven research can power evidence-based policy-making, and in this way protect the Internet and promote its possibilities, including innovative approaches, so as to contribute to Internet Universality and hence to the 2030 Development Agenda. We invite participation in developing these indicators.

22. In summing up, UNESCO is deeply involved in synergising our contributions under the WSIS and SDG banners. This is evident not least in the new International Day for Universal Access to Information on 28 September. With our Internet Universality concept and the ROAM model, we are confident of contributing to the needed innovation in, and through, ICTs and the wider information ecosystem so as to speed our pace towards the 2030 rendezvous.