

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

**Item 2: Panel discussion 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

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Tuesday, 9 May 2017

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UK intervention - WSIS

Thank the secretariat for work preparing for this important meeting and the panellists yesterday for a diverse, interesting and sometimes inspiring series of presentations.

The presentations and the Secretary General's report set out some of the challenges that face us as we pursue the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

It is clear that access and affordability remain critical issues in many parts of the world.

The great strength of the WSIS agenda is that it addresses the root causes of the digital divide:

- Skills development and capacity building are widely recognised as crucial areas and should remain a clear priority.
- Building an enabling environment for investment continues to be vital - The Secretary General's report says rightly that private sector remains the main source of ICT sector finance. That's why an enabling environment is so important, but it is also important that the private sector is able to engage fully in international organisations, to strengthen and extend public-private partnership and to help ensure we are working together in the same direction.
- It is becoming increasingly clear that gender is an urgent issue: across the world as a whole women are 12% less likely to use the Internet, but in developing countries that figure is 31%. We all need to address the social and economic inequalities behind these figures if we are to tackle the digital divide.
- And human rights remains a key concern: WSIS is a people-centred development agenda and it is the talents and creativity and energy of people around the world which will help bridge the digital divide. That can't happen when human rights and fundamental freedoms are at risk.

A lot of progress has been made this year:

- The IANA transition was historic step, great example of multi-stakeholder community working together. All those involved deserve congratulations.
- We had an outstanding IGF in Mexico (and we have to thank Mexico for hosting such a valuable and successful event). In particular it made good progress in best practice forums and policy options for connect the next billion.
- It was also good to read in the Secretary General's report about e-commerce week at UNCTAD and many of the other initiatives taking place across the UN system.

2015 was a milestone year, with the ten year review of WSIS and the setting of a new Sustainable Development Agenda for 2015. The WSIS review called for an alignment between the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs, and over 2016 we have seen good progress towards that end.

But this is a two-way process. We also have a job to do to make the case for the contribution that the information and knowledge societies make to sustainable development. All of us in this room know it, but we all need to continue to make that case to the wider development community and ensure we are working together.

That means reaching out proactively to other orgs, overcoming the silos between different bodies, including UN bodies, and building partnerships. It means maintaining an outward looking agenda and engaging with new partners.

CSTD is very well placed to play an important role in this and it is good to see representatives of so many different organisations here this week.

We look forward to continuing to work with colleagues here to make sure that we maximise the contribution that the information society can make to sustainable development.