UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

Agenda item 2: Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels

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Markus Kummer

Vice-President, Public Policy, The Internet Society

Mr. Chairman,

Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to speak to you at the 16th session of the CSTD. The Internet Society is part of the technical community which was recognized in Tunis as a de facto fourth stakeholder group, alongside Governments, civil society and the private sector and I am pleased to note that the Joint Statement by the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), made available in this room, follows this methodology. For the Internet Society, paragraph 36 of the Tunis Agenda is of paramount importance. This paragraph recognizes the technical community’s “valuable contribution to the functioning and development of the Internet”.

As we look forward towards defining the Post-2015 Development Agenda, there is merit in looking back and taking stock of the progress achieved in the past 10 years. Together, we have come a long way, as many speakers have already asserted. David Souter in his presentation eloquently described the shifting ground created by the rapidly evolving technology, making us look at the targets set 10 years ago in a different light. For us, the biggest achievement of WSIS is the recognition of the value of multistakeholder cooperation.

In Tunis, governments represented at the highest level recognized that they cannot do it alone – on the path towards the knowledge society they rely on the expertise and know-how of the other stakeholders. For us, this is also key in the approach of WSIS+10 – the full and active involvement of all stakeholders. We believe that at the heart of achieving our goals is the multi-stakeholder approach.

The technical community has pioneered this approach. All policy and standards developing processes are carried out in an open, inclusive and transparent format. Whoever wants to, can participate in these processes and have his or her voice heard. Of course the process is not an aim in itself, but past experience and success stories of countries which have adopted open, inclusive participatory processes show that the multistakeholder approach helps us take better decisions.

As Internet broadband becomes more accessible around the world, new opportunities also raise complex regulatory challenges.
Internet Governance Forum

These are issues that are being discussed by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) where all stakeholder stake part on an equal footing. It is important for policymakers to engage in a dialogue with the private sector, with civil society and the technical community. This allows them to benefit from the expertise and experience of the other stakeholders when developing legal, policy and regulatory approaches to maximize the growth and development opportunities the Internet offers.

The Internet Society attaches great importance to the IGF and considers it to be one of the most significant outcomes of WSIS. 22 regional and national IGF initiatives pay tribute to the IGF concept and have started a participatory multistakeholder approach in Internet policy matters in all regions. This is in line with paragraph 80 of the Tunis Agenda which calls for “the development of multi-stakeholder processes at the national, regional and international levels to discuss and collaborate on the expansion and diffusion of the Internet”. The same paragraph also reminds us that the Internet should be seen “as a means to support development efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.” It is important to bear this in mind when approaching the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

For full disclosure purposes, I need to mention at this point that I have been appointed by the USG for Economic and Social Affairs as intermin chair of the MAG—the group that is preparing the programme for the 2013 IGF meeting. We had a good meeting here in Geneva two weeks ago and agreed to propose “Building Bridges - - Enhancing Multistakeholder Cooperation for Growth and Sustainable Development” as the overarching theme of the meeting which is to take place in Bali in October 2013.

The proposed theme reflects the spirit of the recent World Telecommunication /ICT Policy Forum of the ITU (WTPF) and echoes remarks by ITU Secretary General Touré who used similar words when opening the meeting, emphasizing the need to build bridges.

We are fortunate to have CSTD Vice-Chair Peter Major as a MAG Member – he chaired the CSTD Working Group on IGF improvement and is able to give his advise on how to take into account its recommendations. In looking at the programme and schedule of the meeting, the MAG took on board some key recommendations of the working group, in particular to aim for more tangible outcomes and linking the IGF to other related processes.

The Bali meeting will be able to build on the WTPF and we hope indeed that it will be able to build bridges and bring people together in discussing how best to bring the Internet’s benefits, as a driver of economic and social development, to the billions of people who are not yet connected.

WSIS +10 review process

Now, as we are about to start he WSIS+10 Review, it is essential to preserve and enhance the multistakeholder approach.
The first WSIS +10 review event took place in February held at the UNESCO HQ. It set a benchmark for future WSIS related meetings and we hope it will be the model for the broader WSIS +10 review process in terms of openness and inclusiveness.

In accordance with the Tunis Agenda, the review process should focus on the implementation of existing goals. WSIS+10 should also reaffirm the principles and commitments made in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005.

Sharing best practices can provide guidance and set benchmarks. The review could benefit from analyzing the underlying causes for success. It could also identify areas where implementation was not as successful as had been hoped for. Looking at reasons why a policy was not successful can teach equally valuable lessons.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate the importance of the multistakeholder approach in shaping the policy framework for the knowledge society and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Joint Statement agreed on by UNGIS provides a useful reference point and highlights the importance of the Internet and its enabling power in “ensuring rights-based development, especially enabling wider exercise of freedom of expression and press freedom, which in turn are critical to combating corruption, ensuring gender-sensitivity, deepening accountability, and promoting socially inclusive development”.

We welcome the opportunity to be a part of the WSIS implementation and review efforts, and very much look forward to continuing our cooperation with other stakeholders.

Thank you.