



General Assembly's overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes

Official Form for Comments on the zero-draft

A. Your Information

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B. Formal Input

The Internet Society thanks the co-facilitators for their work in developing the zero draft for the United Nations General Assembly Overall Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), based on the contributions submitted by a wide variety of stakeholders in the WSIS process. The Internet Society also thanks the co-facilitators for giving stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the zero draft and looks forward to contributing to the second draft due for publication at the last week of November.

Below follows the Internet Society's overall comments on the zero draft and the respective sections.

General Comments

ICT for Development: The open Internet is and will continue to be an essential tool in facilitating the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as a key means to leverage the ingenuity, collaboration and partnerships needed to make them a reality. Thus, we are pleased that the zero draft explicitly links the WSIS Action Lines to the SDGs.

¹ When specifying your stakeholder type, please indicate one of the following: Government, Civil Society, Private Sector, Academia, and Technical Sector.

The WSIS vision is to build a people-centered Information Society that fosters development through social and economic inclusion. Today, as the Internet has proved its intrinsic link to economic growth and social progress, this vision and the need for realizing its full potential, is more important than ever. This perspective was confirmed at the Sustainable Development Summit. In particular, recognizing the role of local content and gender in resolving the remaining digital divide is important in this context to ensure access for all.

Getting the next billion connected to an open, trusted Internet remains a primary goal of the Internet Society. As such, we believe that the text should recognize that the open and inclusive nature of the Internet is what makes it such a powerful tool for global development. This was reflected in consensus documents of the ten-year Review of the WSIS organized by UNESCO (2013) and ITU (2014).

Internet Governance: Flexible, open and inclusive governance frameworks have been key to the exponential growth of the Information Society over the last decade. By including a clear reference to paragraph 34 of the Tunis Agenda, the zero draft reaffirms the value of a distributed model of governance where each stakeholder group has its own role and responsibility in the evolution of the Internet - while all converge towards a common goal of enabling an Internet of opportunity for all.

We applaud the renewal of the IGF's mandate as a bottom-up, multistakeholder forum for policy dialogue. The IGF has proven its value through its open, inclusive, bottom-up structure, and we strongly believe that the current format, as specified in paragraphs 72 to 77 of the Tunis Agenda, should be preserved in order for the IGF to continue to be successful.

We also acknowledge the reiteration of an approach to security that emphasizes the need for the collaboration of all stakeholders in promoting, developing and implementing security. The Internet Society strongly believes that this collaborative model is the most efficient and effective way to ensure trust and security in the Information Society.

Implementation and follow-up:

The bottom-up process of ICTs and Internet adoption, particularly in developing countries, and especially as it relates to local content, is an important part of building the Information Society.

In addition, we believe that any follow-up processes should not focus on new measures or instruments without an assessment of need and progress made.

Finally, it is our view that the urgency is to further implement the WSIS targets. On the contrary, preparations for a new Summit in the medium future would not be a good use of stakeholders' resources.

Comments on the preamble

Paragraph 7: The text emphasizes the role of ICTs in general, but it should also emphasize the way the open and inclusive nature of the Internet has enabled progress on the Millennium Development Goals; and its future role in promoting sustainable development. This is especially important since Agenda 2030 explicitly includes a target for universal and affordable access to an open Internet.

ICT for Development

Bridging the Digital Divide

The zero draft includes an important focus on the need to further bridge the digital divide. However, the text does not reflect that the progress made to date is the result of collaboration amongst *all* stakeholders, and that a collaborative approach is essential to solve the global and multi-faceted challenge of connecting the next billion. This should be added.

Enabling Environment

Paragraph 24: The open and inclusive dialogue and consultation amongst all stakeholders has been one of the key parts in fostering the growth of the Information Society and implementing the WSIS Action Lines. The Internet Society proposes that the paragraph reflects the importance of continuing this dynamic process by revising the paragraph as follows: *“We request the UN agencies to regularly advise, as well as seek expertise from, governments and all stakeholders of specific, detailed interventions they consider to support the enabling environment for ICT and development.”*

Internet Governance

Paragraph 37: The Internet Society applauds the renewal of the IGF’s mandate, but would also suggest adding a reference to relevant paragraphs of the Tunis Agenda, which define its unique format. The new sentence would read as follow: *“We extend the IGF mandate for another [five] years with its current mandate and format as set out in paragraphs 72 to 77 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.”* Indeed the success of the IGF to date is due to its unique governance model: open, inclusive and bottom-up. The multiplication of IGF-type initiatives on all continents demonstrates the value of this model.

Enhanced Cooperation

Paragraph 39: A re-formulation of the last sentence is needed in order to explicitly recognize multistakeholder dialogue as a crucial element of enhanced cooperation. Our proposed new text is consistent with paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda and reads as follow: *“In order to address these concerns, we call for a multistakeholder dialogue, inclusive of all stakeholders in their respective roles, on enhanced cooperation.”*

Human Rights

The Internet Society supports the inclusion of Human Rights in the zero draft. However, we believe that Human Rights and ICTs is a broader issue that goes beyond Internet governance arrangements. Indeed, an Internet experience based on the respect of Human Rights online is a necessary pillar in order to reach the full benefits that the Internet can offer. Human Rights must be addressed horizontally. We therefore suggest that the section on Human Rights is listed as a section on its own, and not as a sub-section to Internet Governance.

Furthermore, the Internet Society firmly believes that trust and the respect of individual freedoms, whether offline or online, are essential building blocks to achieve human, economic and social development. We would recommend that the text adds a reference to the importance of open and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders in order to ensure that ICTs and the Internet continue to be harnessed as enablers for fundamental rights.

Paragraph 43: We believe that a reference to Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is appropriate since its content is part of the paragraph.

Building Confidence and Security in the use of ICTs

We believe the reiteration of an approach to security that emphasizes the need for the collaboration of all stakeholders in developing and implementing security, is a constructive way forward. The Internet has evolved through the cooperation and collaboration of all stakeholders, and its interdependent nature makes its resilience and integrity a collective responsibility for all its participants. We believe that this collaborative model is the most efficient and effective way to ensure trust and security in the Information Society.

However, since the text refers to building confidence and security in ICTs in general, beyond Internet governance arrangements, we believe this section should be listed as a section on its own, and not as a sub-section to Internet governance.

Implementation and follow-up

Paragraph 58: The WSIS follow-up process has evolved in remarkable ways over the years, intergovernmental organizations have progressively opened-up to stakeholders' participation while the various communities have learned to work in a collaborative fashion. This positive evolution should be reflected, as stated in the final outcome documents of the ten-year Review of the WSIS organized by UNESCO (2013) and ITU (2014).

Furthermore, the text seems to narrow the possible solutions to normative governmental tools while the past decade has demonstrated that there exists a wide range of options through multistakeholder cooperation.

In terms of follow-up, we recommend a combination of UN entities and fora to be involved, given their various expertise, including UNGIS and the CSTD. In particular, the cooperation between the ITU, UNESCO and UNDP in preparing the ten-year review of the WSIS was very constructive and so we would welcome a similar partnership among UN Agencies, each working within their mandate, going forward.

We believe that although the WSIS Action Lines may need to be updated over time, a full "reconsideration" isn't necessary. Furthermore, it is clear that the WSIS framework and especially the Tunis Agenda still provide a valuable framework for the future. We do not believe that preparations for a Summit would be an appropriate use of stakeholders' resources given the urgency to continue implementing the WSIS targets.

Finally, we anticipate that, as synergies are found between the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs, we will find new and innovative ways to address the challenges raised in the WSIS Review.