

**Intersessional Panel of the United Nations Commission on Science and
Technology for Development (CSTD)**

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Contribution by

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**Statement on the Ten-year Review of Progress Made in the Implementation of the Outcomes
of the World Summit on the Information Society
28 November 2014**

We the undersigned organisations from civil society welcome the CSTD Secretariat's draft report on the Ten-year Review of Progress Made in the Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The CSTD Secretariat's report represents the most comprehensive review of the implementation of the WSIS to date, drawing on a wide range of sources, and importantly, the results of a multistakeholder survey. We believe the report also offers a balanced view of differing perspectives on the state of WSIS implementation.

As such, we encourage the CSTD, ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly to take this report into account in its overall review of the WSIS.

As civil society organisations, we remain strongly committed to the WSIS goal of achieving "a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life."¹

We would like to make the following observations regarding some of the findings in the report:

1) We agree with the report on the significant positive impact that has resulted from the increased availability and use of ICTs, and with the point it makes that along with positive change, new divides have emerged, both within and between countries.

We would like to emphasise that building a people-centered and development-oriented information society is not just about access to technology; it requires states and other actors to invest in human development, institutional capacity, democratic, transparent and accountable governance and to protect and promote civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

2) We are encouraged to see strong recognition of the important roles that different stakeholders as well as multistakeholder participation and cooperation have played in the implementation of WSIS outcomes, especially in Internet governance.

We do believe that multistakeholder processes are still evolving and that their inclusiveness, accountability and transparency need to be strengthened. We believe that the goal of people-centered information societies can be best achieved through the implementation of processes that engage all stakeholders, including those representing marginalised groups.

We encourage governments to adopt multistakeholder processes and for such approaches to be put into practice more widely so that their benefits can be realised by all. This is essential because we believe that achieving effective cooperation among stakeholders remains a challenge, particularly in those countries where civil society is not free to play one of its most significant roles: independent actors holding governments accountable for furthering the public interest and protecting human rights.

1 From part 1 of the Geneva Declaration <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html>

3) We are pleased to see the recognition of the important role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the positive contribution it has made to the discussion of not just Internet governance but to a wide range of Internet related issues.

We strongly support the recommendations contained in the report of the CSTD Working Group on IGF Improvements about strengthening the IGF. We also support the recommendations on the IGF in the NETmundial Multistakeholder Statement, in particular the call for mechanisms to promote intersessional dialogues, and to provide outcomes/recommendations and the analysis of policy options. We urge the IGF's Multistakeholder Advisory Committee to take these recommendations up as a priority and agree a concrete plan to incorporate them into the 2015 work cycle and meetings.

We recommend that IGF be renewed for at least a further 10 years and that all stakeholders contribute to continuing to improve its capacity to be the world's foremost forum for addressing internet related policy concerns in an open, inclusive and transparent manner.

4) We encourage all UN institutions involved with WSIS follow up and implementation to continue to strengthen their implementation of the WSIS principles of participation from all stakeholders. In this regard we want to express our appreciation for the efforts that the CSTD has made in this regard, and urge it to facilitate even greater civil society participation in the future.

5) We welcome that the report touches on the need to address human rights in the Information Society. The WSIS outcome documents incorporated the international human rights standards and this remains one of the WSIS's most enduring features.

6) We commend the report for recognizing the importance of cybersecurity. While further coordination on identifying cyber threats and building cybersecurity awareness and expertise is important, it is equally as important that development of cyber policy include all stakeholders and respect human rights by design.

7) There remains much to do with regard to achieving the people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information society envisaged in WSIS. A challenge we are particularly concerned with is achieving gender equality. Women's access to ICTs remains limited in many places due to the concentration of women among those with the lowest income and levels of education. Women are also frequently prevented from expressing themselves freely and openly on the internet when demanding rights and justice.

8) We agree that more needs to be done to increase affordable access to ICTs, and wish to reiterate the importance of public access, which was recognised in the WSIS+10 Vision and urge a greater focus on providing public access through facilities such as libraries and community information centres or other publicly available access points, particularly in rural and remote areas.

9) We believe that the future implementation of WSIS outcomes should be forward looking, and not based only on what was decided ten years ago. New challenges are posed by developments such as big data, the internet of things and cross border jurisdiction. They create new divides and require new responses.

10) We share the report's concern that ICTs and the information society are not embedded effectively in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and post-2015 preparatory documents and agree that there should be greater integration between WSIS outcomes and the Post-2015 Development Agenda that will be adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. We therefore call on UN Member States to ensure the SDGs recognize "the important role of local authorities, information

intermediaries and infrastructure such as ICTs and an open Internet as a means of implementation.”

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In this regard, we would like to use this opportunity to urge all stakeholders to refocus on the development dimension of the WSIS. There is no doubt that Internet governance issues are important, but we must ensure that the original goal of the WSIS - that of harnessing the potential of ICTs for development - becomes the central focus of the WSIS going forward.

Thank you.

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