UN ICT TASK FORCE

Principles and elements
of a Global Alliance for ICT and Development[1]

30 NOVEMBER 2005

In July 2004, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has requested the Chairman of the United Nations ICT Task Force to develop detailed proposals on an alliance for information and communication technologies (ICT) and development. In implementation of this request, open on-line and physical consultations with all stakeholders were launched following the Seventh meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force in Berlin (November 2004) and have continued through open consultations held on 21 February 2005 in Geneva, on 13 April 2005 in Dublin and on 31 May in Shanghai. Members of the Task Force discussed this matter extensively at the meeting of the Task Force on 15 April 2005 in Dublin, as well as on-line. Letters requesting comments on successive revised drafts were sent to all Permanent Missions in New York on 21 March and 14 June 2005. A series of broad consultations was undertaken, on the Chairman's behalf, in Europe, as well as in conjunction with other events such as the meeting of the Group of the Friends of the Chair (Geneva, 13 June 2005) and the meeting of WGIG (Geneva, 14-17 June 2005).

The final round of consultations was held in conjunction with the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis at an open meeting on 17 November 2005 and at the ICT Task Force meeting on 18 November. These two meetings focused on the meaning of WSIS outcomes, in particular as regards a future Internet Governance Forum and the overall WSIS follow up, for the proposed Global Alliance.

Outcome of open consultations and discussions

As a result of these open consultations and discussions a broad consensus has emerged that there is a need to continue an open, transparent, multi-stakeholder dialogue on the focused role of ICT in development. A multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral Global Alliance for ICT and Development was seen by most participants as the optimal approach.

The mission of the Alliance should be responding to the need and demand for an inclusive global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue, conducted in an open, multi-stakeholder and transparent manner, on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, notably reduction of poverty.

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[1] Working title.

Several principles enjoy multi-stakeholder support and are considered essential features of the Alliance:

- The Alliance should build on the experience of and further advance the work of initiatives such as the DOT Force and the UN ICT Task Force, as well as the experience of the WSIS process, providing a platform for cross-sectoral policy and partnership dialogue with the full and equal engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders representing all relevant constituencies from all parts of the world.

- The Alliance should make full use of and cooperate with existing institutions and networks[2] and their forums and collaborate, in a coherent and complementary manner, with other activities related to WSIS follow-up and implementation, by enhancing multi-stakeholder, cross-cutting and cross-sectoral dialogue on global ICT for Development (ICT4D) and Information Society issues, thus contributing to the effectiveness, visibility and development impact of these entities and initiatives and enhancing their inclusive character.

- The Alliance should significantly expand the circle of participants in policy debate beyond the traditional set of stakeholders, by active outreach aimed at engaging younger champions of ICT4D ("leaders of tomorrow"), non-governmental participants from developing countries, media, academia and other constituencies that currently are not adequately involved.

- The Alliance should help identify and focus on priority issues related to ICT4D that are not adequately addressed, or where "intellectual vacuum" persists, with a view to triggering action and fostering problem-oriented partnerships.

- The Alliance should be a model of using technology to enhance efficiency of interaction, including by making extensive use of virtual collaborative tools.

- The Alliance should be linked to the United Nations and work under the authority of the Secretary-General and the auspices of the ECOSOC, reporting periodically, through the Secretary-General, to ECOSOC for assessment and guidance. In accordance with the Tunis Agenda for the

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[2] Including, but not limited to relevant organizations of the United Nations system (ITU, UNESCO, WIPO, UNCTAD, the World Bank, Regional Commissions and others), Global Knowledge Partnership, regional development banks, private sector organizations (GBDe, GIIC, ICC, WITSA), civil society, Internet community.

[4] The United Nations supports multi-stakeholder partnerships in a number of areas (sustainable development, water, energy, HIV/AIDS, and others).

Information Society adopted by the Tunis phase of WSIS, the Global Alliance will provide indispensable multi-stakeholder complement at the international level to the intergovernmental follow-up process by ECOSOC.

- The Alliance must pursue an active outreach policy to ensure transparency and visibility of its work and results.

- The Alliance should not perpetuate the existence of the Task Force which will expire at the end of 2005. The Alliance will need to build on, sustain and strengthen the global and regional networks that already exist, and should be based on open and participatory principles.

- The Alliance will not create a new United Nations organization but will function as a decentralized multi-stakeholder network and partnership drawing upon and interlinking with existing institutions and forums. The Alliance will not have an operational, policy-making or negotiating function. Its role must strengthen the work and activities of existing UN and other organizations, not duplicate them.

- Since the Alliance will be financed by voluntary contributions of its members and partners, it will not have financial implications for the regular budget of the United Nations. However, in order to ensure full transparency and accountability, it would function in accordance with relevant United Nations financial rules and regulations.

Objectives

The Alliance would seek to contribute to the achievement of the following objectives:

- Mainstreaming of the global ICT agenda into the broader United Nations development agenda;

- Bringing together key organizations involved in ICT4D to enhance their collaboration and effectiveness in the use of ICT for development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals;

- Promoting focused dialogue on ICT4D issues, primarily by virtual means and during related events;

- Raising awareness on ICT4D policy issues through organizing events/forums;

- Facilitating identification of technological solutions for specific internationally agreed development goals and promoting pertinent partnerships;
- Creating an enabling environment and innovative business models for pro-poor investment and growth and for empowering people living in poverty;

- Acting as a "think-tank" on ICT4D-related issues and as an Advisory Group to the Secretary-General.

Functioning modalities

The principal modality of functioning will be that of a decentralized network of existing forums and institutions, bringing them together into a global forum under the patronage of the Secretary-General and the auspices of ECOSOC. A principal distinguishing feature of the Alliance, and its value added, will be in providing a multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral platform that would bring together all stakeholders representing relevant constituencies (for example, in governments - development cooperation, foreign policy, finance, sectoral (health, education) and regulatory agencies; in the private sector - industry associations, producers and consumers of ICT, the media; in civil society – NGOs, CSOs, foundations, scientific, academic and ICT communities and individuals providing advocacy and oversight on Information Society issues and implementing programs addressing MDGs).

At present, no such cross-sectoral platform exists. Policy debate – even when undertaken in a multi-stakeholder format – is fragmented into multiple distinct sectoral processes with inadequate cross-fertilization. As a result, while the challenge of harnessing the potential of ICT for development is by definition cross-sectoral, our collective response to this challenge remains fragmented.

The Global Knowledge Partnership is a very valuable embodiment of existing efforts to provide a multi-stakeholder network on ICT4D. The Global Alliance will therefore need to collaborate closely with the GKP to strengthen a joint effort by supporting it with convening power and reach that come with a United Nations affiliation.

The recently adopted *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* "attaches great importance to multi-stakeholder implementation at the international level" and encouraged "the development of multi-stakeholder processes at the national, regional and international levels for policy dialogue and building partnerships with a view to the expansion and diffusion of the Internet as a means to support development effort and achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs". The proposed Global Alliance, by providing an inclusive multi-stakeholder global platform for policy dialogue on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, will respond directly to this mandate.

The Alliance and the Internet Governance Forum, which will focus on "public policy issues related to key elements of Internet Governance" (Tunis Agenda, paragraph 72) are envisaged as substantively distinct streams of activities.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the Alliance would function as a multi-stakeholder partnership supported by the United Nations[4], and should in principle be linked with the broader UN development agenda leading to 2015.

The Alliance would rely on light and agile structures tailored to specific topics that the Alliance may decide to address. The Secretary-General may wish to form a high-level Advisory Board to provide strategic overall guidance to the work of the Global Alliance, ensure engagement of top-level expertise and leadership, and facilitate effective outreach and influence with leaders of today and tomorrow. The organizational direction would be provided by a small Steering Committee. These mechanisms would be formed on the basis of balanced representation in terms of regions, stakeholders and gender, and allow nomination of representatives by their constituencies (civil society, private sector, academia).

Identification of priorities and themes to be pursued in policy dialogue should be done in open consultation with general membership.

Core organizational and administrative support will be provided by a small secretariat based initially at UN Headquarters in New York, with possible regional and stakeholder-based nodes.

Participation

As distinct from previous initiatives, the Alliance would be open to participation of all stakeholders, including governments, business, civil society, international organizations, industry groups and professional associations, media, academia, and the broad ICT and development communities. Groups of participants would coalesce around specific topics of mutual interest put forward for discussion.

Funding arrangements

The Alliance activities would be funded by voluntary contributions, both financial and in-kind (such as providing networking support, hosting meetings, contributing to logistical or staff support, co-producing publications, etc.).