

Business Plan for the UN ICT Task Force for 2004

The two years of Task Force activities showed both its potential and limitations, but even more importantly, it has proved that such a platform is really needed. The Task Force has demonstrated its value and relative strengths in the changing political and institutional environment. As a non-operational entity on a very limited budget, the UN ICT Task Force has performed well. It has created the organizational infrastructure with which to address critical issues of our day: the eradication of endemic poverty, and creating new opportunities for people around the world. The Task Force has also proved its effectiveness in incubating action-oriented coalitions of its members and non-member partners that were able to mobilize and sustain adequate resources – intellectual, institutional and financial – in pursuit of agreed objectives.

The Task Force has a unique role to play in the global ICT for development dialogue as a truly multi-stakeholder forum. Nonetheless, we, the members of the Task Force, must keep in mind that simply being uniquely constituted and well-intentioned is not enough to justify its existence. The Task Force must be effective.

In order to achieve its objectives and fulfill its mandate, the Task Force must further strengthen what it does best – provide a representative and efficient platform for contributing to policy debate and for formulation of strategies for the development and use of ICT, support national and international efforts in developing sustainable and comprehensive ICT-for-development policies and programmes, and promote partnerships for results. To be effective, relevant and recognized, the Task Force must build further on its unique strengths, in particular its status as a multi-stakeholder, representative entity within the United Nations which can help forge a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, the private sector, financial trusts and foundations, donors, programme countries and other relevant stakeholders united by a common purpose – harness the development potential of ICT.

Taking into account real-life limitations, the only way to accomplish these tasks is to focus on a limited number of deliverables that would: a) address a concrete task that has an almost universal attractiveness (such as, for example, improving education); b) be formulated in very concrete, distinct and achievable terms with clearly identified inputs, timetables and benchmarks; and c) require particular comparative strengths of the Task Force to be achieved (things that would not have happened without the Task Force). Experience showed that unless all of these conditions are met, even tasks that are broadly

appealing to many actors do not generate enough sustainable involvement and resources and, as a result, fizzle out without achieving tangible results.

A review of activities of the Task Force and its subsidiary bodies undertaken during the Fifth meeting of the Task Force session showed that the Working Groups and Regional Nodes have accomplished a great deal in their areas of work and are attracting broad participation. While preserving the decentralized principle of interaction between the Task Force and its subsidiary bodies, there is a need for greater exchange of information among them and for enhanced visibility of their work. The Task Force should continue to support the activities of its Working Groups and Regional Nodes.

Taking all of the above into account, it is proposed that for the third year of its operation the Task Force focus on several priority tracks of activities.

Track 1 – Monitoring and Benchmarking Progress on WSIS Implementation

The multi-stakeholder character of the Task Force and its active global system of subsidiary bodies and networks make it uniquely positioned for contributing to the critically important follow-up to the WSIS decisions between Geneva and Tunis. This seems an ideal way to benefit from the infrastructure the Task Force has built over the last two years: regional networks, working groups, digital diaspora networks and experts networks. This already existing multi-stakeholder platform could be used for immediate action in a number of priority areas (such as, for example, helping to benchmark the process of implementation during the inter-phase period, forging multi-stakeholder partnerships, and contributing to discussions on Internet governance).

The Task Force should continue to develop its on-going work on issues related to Information Society and further strengthen its close collaboration with all other entities that are involved in the follow-up and implementation activities in substantive areas covered by the Plan of Action as approved by the Summit, including, in particular, with the WSIS Executive Secretariat and other agencies of the United Nations.

It would be important to stress that any role that the Task Force may assume in the WSIS process should be within its existing mandate and realistically reflect actual capacity of the Task Force. Therefore such a role should be basically a reinforcement of existing priority areas of Task Force's activity (such as the relationship between ICT and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, building multi-stakeholder partnerships, ICT policy and governance, capacity building, affordable and sustainable solutions, including on connectivity, hardware and software) rather than any qualitatively new field of activity.

The internationally agreed development goals and targets of the United Nations provide a broadly accepted global benchmark for development. They point to goals in relation to basic development needs, and direct attention to the ways and means of achieving them. Information and communication technologies in this context can and

should be seen as vital tools in responding to development priorities in areas like education, health and poverty reduction.

The Task Force could help in measuring the impact of ICT on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, through a set of national and cross-national indicators that could provide a basis for monitoring progress on the “ICT millennium agenda”. This work should be seen as complementary to work undertaken elsewhere, in particular in Task Force 10 of the Millennium Project, at the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, UNDP and the ITU’s Development Sector. A significant volume of work is being done on indicators in this particular area and it is important to help coordinate these efforts to create a tracking tool for the Task Force and WSIS. Besides, there is a need to communicate the relationship between ICT and poverty reduction not only through papers but also through success stories and examples.

The on-going work on the relationship indicators between ICT and the internationally agreed development goals should continue to be spearheaded by the group led by the Canadian Department of Industry. Contributors, deliverables and timetables, as well as resource requirements, will need to be further specified.

Expected deliverables:

- elaboration of the conceptual relationship that exists between ICT and basic development goals in areas like education, health and the reduction of poverty;
- definition of the specific targets and milestones for ICT development internationally, relevant to the goals of the Millennium Declaration;
- matching of the proposed ICT targets with the targets set out in the Millennium Declaration, and monitoring progress;
- clarification of the operational roles and responsibilities of international agencies for the collection, compilation and comparison of statistical data pertaining to ICT development;
- integration, in concert with interested international agencies (UNCTAD, ITU, OECD, UNDP and others), of the key statistical indicators into an ICT4MDG benchmarking report for the World Summit in 2005.

Resource requirements (from the budget of the Task Force) ¹:

Participants and contributors:

¹ Resources mobilized by the Working Groups and Regional Nodes for the implementation of their projects and programmes should be reflected – in a notional format, if necessary, and in a clearly identified section of the document – in the statement of income and expenditure of the Task Force.

- Government of Canada
- UNCTAD
- United Nations Development Programme
- ITU
- World Bank
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Task Force Members, its Working Groups and Regional Nodes
- UN Statistical Commission
- OECD
- Others

Track 2 – Promoting a dialogue on Internet governance and other policy issues

Building on its recognized strengths - multi-stakeholder platform, global presence and a direct link to the United Nations Secretary-General -- the Task Force will explore opportunities and mechanisms for helping to bring relevant actors together to contribute to discussions on Internet governance that will take place within the framework of a working group on Internet governance and on other policy issues created by the IT revolution. This work will be based on the on-going activities in the areas of ICT Policy and Governance (Working Group 1) and e-Strategies (Working Group 2). The objective is to contribute to the international debate on this crucial set of issues, facilitate a foundation for a meaningful and consensual debate, and thus make a tangible contribution to the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis.

Expected deliverables and their timetables:

- Outcomes of the Global Forum on Internet governance (March 2004);
- Contribution to on-line forum on Internet governance;
- Facilitating meetings on Internet governance to be organized by Regional Nodes of the ICT Task Force;
- Recommendations to be presented by the Task Force to the Secretary-General

Resource requirements (from the budget of the Task Force):

Participants and contributors:

- Members of the Task Force (in particular, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP, Inter-American Development Bank), its Working Groups and Regional Nodes; UN Regional Commissions;
- Government of Switzerland, WSIS-on-line platform;
- WSIS Executive Secretariat;
- Internet governance stakeholders;

Track 3 – Enabling Environment

Information and communications technologies are one the most important building blocks of future economic and social development and job creation. International experience has shown that the social and economic benefits of ICT can only be seized in a favorable economic, political and regulatory environment. Each of the stakeholders – governments, development agencies, international financing institutions, consumers and business -- has an important role to play in concerted actions to create the required conditions. The ICT Task Force is in an excellent position to discuss these roles with a view to identifying effective modalities for promoting and supporting actions towards enabling environment.

Government actions are responsible for facilitating competition by opening markets, eliminating any barriers to competition and encouraging investments in communications infrastructure, and by establishing an independent Communications Regulatory Authority. Development agencies may wish to allocate sufficient resources to support the development of ICT in the developing world while respecting fair competition. International financing institutes can also give priority to the Information Society development. Industry should contribute by developing more efficient, user friendly and affordable technologies and solutions, which will facilitate the reduction of the total cost of ownership for consumers to levels within their reach. Industry will also contribute through various digital bridging and community involvement programs and actions, which will help people and communities to become involved in the information society development.

The importance of the enabling environment is widely recognized among the stakeholders. The recent WSIS in Geneva endorsed the decisive role of enabling environment. The UN ICT Task Force will work together with other stakeholders to identify best practices, which constitute the road map towards favorable conditions for the information society development. The work on the information society indicators should also contribute to WSIS follow up and implementation process in different countries.

In collaboration with different partners, including from the private sector, the Task Force will promote capacity building in ICT policy-making in developing countries and countries with economy in transition. This will be done, in part, by leveraging resources provided by the Development Account project that is going to be led by UN/DESA. The major contribution by Task Force will be in supporting the establishment of networks of policy makers and practitioners and in facilitating on-line training.

In terms of supporting national and international efforts in developing sustainable and comprehensive ICT-for-development policies and national e-strategies for development, the Task Force will continue to support ePol-Net. This network, led by the Government of Canada, provides ICT policymakers in developing countries with the

depth and quality of information needed to develop effective national e-policies and e-strategies.

Expected deliverables and their timetables:

- Contribution to the creation of enabling economic, regulatory and administrative environment
- Contribution to capacity building in ICT policy making

Resource requirements (from the budget of the Task Force):

Participants and contributors:

- Members of the Task Force (in particular, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP, Nokia, Inter-American Development Bank), its Working Groups and Regional Nodes; UN Regional Commissions;
- ICC Commission on E-business, IT and Telecoms
- Wireless Internet Institute, AllAfrica; GKP
- ePolNet
- Others

Track 4 - On-going Activities

The Task Force has incubated and launched, during the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003, a new initiative -- **the Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI)**. This ambitious project is conceived on the basis of lessons that have been learned over the last several years in the global development arena. It has been generally agreed that ICT are a tool for development that needs to be mainstreamed into the various development agendas, and that key issues in ICT for development are connectivity and education. Connectivity is of little benefit without education. Linking of ICT and education therefore is a priority area for the Task Force to concentrate on.

In order to have real impact, it is essential to move beyond the pilot programs that are typical of most activity today and create coordinated initiatives that address all aspects of deploying and using ICT successfully in schools. GeSCI will work in partnership with local governments, private sector companies and civil society organizations to create effective end-to-end systems that have all the functions needed to deliver, operate and support the solution identified by the partners.

The essence of the challenge is to transform today's fragmented, supply-driven, largely uncoordinated pilot efforts for ICT in education into efficient, demand driven, coordinated end-to-end systems implemented by strong partnerships involving all key

players. The distinctive feature of GeSCI is that it does not limit its intended impact to improving education through the use of ICT. It goes further and aims to use the strengthened education infrastructure for empowering local communities by facilitating their access to global and local information and knowledge flows. This will significantly strengthen their capacity to benefit from e-health, e-commerce, e-government, e-democracy and all other empowerment tools that ICT bring about.

Now that the critical mass of political support has been successfully mobilized, and the Initiative launched, GeSCI will be supported by a dedicated secretariat located in Dublin, Ireland and will be financed through an independent budget. The ICT Task Force will continue to play a role in policy direction and linking GeSCI to other activities and actors to ensure coherence.

Participants and contributors:

- Cisneros
- European Commission
- World Bank
- Task Force Regional Networks
- United Nations Development Programme
- UNICEF
- UNESCO
- Governments of Canada, Sweden, Ireland, Switzerland, Namibia, Bolivia, Ghana, Andhra Pradesh (India)
- Private sector companies, in particular McKinsey and Siemens
- Others

The UN ICT Task Force, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations system for cooperation (CEB) has launched a collaborative effort to build complementarity between the two interrelated streams of activities in the system: one on the use of ICT for strengthening the work of the System, particularly in development, and the other on the use of ICT as a strategic management tool. This dialogue between IT managers of entities of the United Nations system and Task Force members was the first step in the development of approaches and a framework for a broad, coherent and effective **ICT strategy for the United Nations system**. Proposals for such a strategy will be submitted to the Secretary-General in 2004.

Expected deliverables and their timetables:

Resource requirements (from the budget of the Task Force):

Participants and contributors:

- Working Group on Human Capacity Development of the ICT Task Force
- Government of Ireland (lead)
- Secretariat of the United Nations Chief Executive's Board on

Coordination

- Wireless Internet Institute
- Intel
- UNITAR

The TF has through its unique membership and approach proven to be an effective incubator for initiatives like **PATIT** (Policy Awareness and Training in IT) for United Nations diplomats, **Digital Diaspora Networks**, **wireless Internet opportunities for developing nations**, **Open Access network** set up by Working Group 5. The TF should continue to use its convening capacity to promote partnerships to spawn concrete initiatives of importance to ICT for development.

Track 5 – Supporting activities

Promotion and Outreach

The Task Force has undertaken significant effort to raise awareness and mobilize support for the ICT for development agenda and contact civil society by organizing conferences and workshops, publications and articles in journals. The Task Force has also projected its work at major international events such as a special meeting of UN General Assembly on ICT for Development, the World Summit on the Information Society and elsewhere. It intends to continue to do so, in particular by active participation in UNCTAD XI.

Nevertheless, the outreach and public information activities need to be reinvigorated and put on a more professional basis with a view to strengthening delivery of information about the activities of the Task Force. Public and media interest in the ICT Task Force must be promoted and nurtured much more effectively through a media-savvy approach and packaging information about the Task Force and its activities in ways that would be newsworthy to media. For example, if the Task Force is involved in work related to streamlining and enhancing operational efficiencies of the United Nations, this could certainly be of interest to the media and public opinion at large, especially in developed countries.

Resource requirements (from the budget of the Task Force):
\$60,000 (for the post of an Outreach Officer in the Secretariat)

Participants and contributors:

- United Nations/DPI

Fundraising

In order to ensure successful implementation of the mandate, Plan of Action and decisions taken by the meetings of the Task Force, as well as for providing an effective secretarial support to Task Force activities and events, it is imperative to establish a stable, sustainable and predictable resource base. It is therefore recommended to establish, on the basis of capacity to pay, the following indicative structure for annual membership contributions to the core budget of the Task Force²:

Category 1	Governments of developed countries	\$200,000-500,000
Category 2	Private sector entities from developed countries	\$100,000-200,000
Category 3	Governments of developing countries	\$50,000- 100,000
Category 4	Private sector entities from developing countries	\$20,000-50,000

It is also proposed that a full-time development officer be added to the Secretariat of the Task Force to ensure a systematic and effective fundraising effort. Funding of this post should come from voluntary contributions; initial funding may come from earmarked contribution by a private sector member(s) of the Task Force.

² On 10 March 2004, the United States made a following comment on this item: “The United States firmly believes that the UN ICT Task Force should continue to be funded through voluntary contributions. We cannot accept the proposed indicative funding structure set forward in the current business plan”.