

UNITED NATIONS ICT TASK FORCE

DRAFT

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Principles and elements for the establishment of a Global Alliance for ICT and Development¹

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has requested the United Nations ICT Task Force to develop detailed proposals on an Alliance for information and communication technologies (ICT) and development. Open on-line and physical consultations with all stakeholders on this matter were launched following the Seventh meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force in Berlin in November 2004 and have continued through consultations held on 21 February 2005 in Geneva and, most recently, on 13 April 2005 in Dublin. Members of the Task Force discussed this matter at the meeting of the Task Force on 15 April 2005.

Outcome of open consultations

As a result of these open consultations a broad consensus has emerged on the need to establish an Alliance. Several points enjoy multi-stakeholder support and are basic for any proposal on the Alliance:

- The proposed Alliance should build on the work of and cooperate with existing institutions and networks² by enhancing multi-stakeholder, cross-cutting and cross-sectoral dialogue on global ICT for Development and Information Society issues.
- The Alliance should function as a multi-stakeholder platform, independent of specific United Nations processes, including WSIS, while contributing to their effectiveness by fostering multi-stakeholder engagement.

¹ Working title.

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

- The Alliance should be linked to the United Nations in a light and innovative manner, under the patronage of the Secretary-General and the auspices of the ECOSOC, for the purposes of equal and inclusive multi-stakeholder participation.
- The Global Alliance proposal is not intended to perpetuate the existence of the Task Force which will expire at the end of 2005. The Alliance will need to build on the experience and strengths of previous initiatives, including the DOT Force and the ICT Task Force, sustain and strengthen the global and regional networks that have been created, but it should be built on more open and participatory principles.
- The Global Alliance will not create a new United Nations organization but will function as a multi-stakeholder network and partnership. The Alliance will not have an operational role. It must not duplicate the work and activities of existing UN and other organizations. Since the Alliance will be financed by 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 due transparency and accountability, it would function in accordance with United Nations financial rules and regulations.

The following preliminary principles and elements of the proposal are intended to elaborate on these basic criteria but should not be considered prescriptive or exhaustive. They are intended to help define value added, product differentiation, target audience and concrete modalities of a future Alliance.

Mandate and mission

The Alliance would:

- build on 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 policy and partnership dialogue through the engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders;
- promote thematic-based dialogue, involving stakeholders beyond the traditional ICT community, based on multi-stakeholder, cross-cutting and cross-sectoral ICT policy and development issues relevant to business, government, civil society and international organizations, and related to the broader UN development agenda and the Information Society.

- meet the need and demand for an inclusive global forum and platform for policy dialogue and consensus-building, conducted in an open, multi-stakeholder and transparent manner, on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of core development goals, notably reduction of poverty, and for building an inclusive, people-centered and development-oriented Information Society;
- facilitate effective and sustained involvement of developing countries in policy and partnership dialogue and enhance their voice in relevant international forums and activities;
- facilitate the creation and inter-linkage of networks for generating action and momentum on core and frontier ICT for Development (ICT4D) and Information Society issues and themes at the grass-roots, national, regional and global levels. The Alliance will not have an operational role;
- catalyze innovative, forward-looking multi-stakeholder partnerships across the spectrum of ICT for Development policies and programmes.
- address policy and implementation gaps and build bridges between development and Information Society goals and strategies by facilitating cross-cutting and cross-sectoral dialogue.

Objectives

The Alliance would:

- promote multi-stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, by mainstreaming the global ICT agenda into the broader United Nations development agenda for the benefit of strategic coherence;
- help foster an enabling environment and innovative business models for pro-poor investment and growth and for empowering people living in poverty;
- promote awareness and understanding of the role of ICT in development among policy makers and the ICT and development communities, facilitate sharing and disseminating experience and lessons learned, as well as promote capacity building;

- facilitate dialogue and consensus building on core and frontier ICT policies and practices of vital interest to broad development objectives and cutting-edge Information Society issues;
- help foster effective interaction and cooperation among relevant international organizations, in particular those of the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society and academia for the benefit of strategic coherence.

Functioning modalities

The Alliance would:

- function under the patronage of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, operating in a light, flexible and non-bureaucratic manner, but in accordance with UN financial rules and regulations. Support for establishment of the Alliance, including the start-up phase, would be spearheaded by the United Nations;
- provide an open, inclusive and sustained multi-stakeholder platform, in collaboration with other partners and organizations, for regular thematic global forums on emerging policy issues and cutting-edge developments in ICT;
- strengthen linkage with UN system and the UN development agenda via a biannual multi-stakeholder high-level policy dialogue held under the auspices of ECOSOC;
- sustain and support development of networks of national, regional and global stakeholder groups, with thematic stakeholder groups and regional nodes undertaking specific activities of the Alliance;
- strive to employ the most efficient online and other technological means to ensure a productive and comprehensive collaborative process;
- exploit synergies with relevant activities, in particular by using events and forums organized by others for conducting the business of the Alliance;
- rely on light and agile structures tailored to specific tasks that the Alliance may undertake, with organizational support provided by a small secretariat based initially in New York, with possible regional and stakeholder nodes;

- The Alliance would function as a multi-stakeholder partnership supported by the United Nations³. It could be composed of a General Forum that would include all members. Members could then determine the governance structure of the Alliance that may include principles of rotation and the need to take into account geographical, stakeholder, gender, institutional and other balances. The Alliance should in principle be co-terminous with the broader UN development agenda leading to 2015. Periodic reviews and assessments of priorities, programmes, achievements and changes needed should be undertaken.

Composition and criteria of membership

As distinct from previous initiatives, membership in the Alliance would be open to all stakeholders, including governments, business, civil society, international organizations, industry groups and professional associations, media, academia, and the broad ICT and development communities. Broad criteria for membership would be based on relevance of interests and activities and ability to engage and participate. Full and equal participation by all members will be a founding principle.

Funding arrangements

The Alliance activities would be funded by contributions by members in combination with voluntary donations and other contributions, both financial and in-kind. Members should be encouraged to contribute on the basis of a principle of “ability to pay”, with a suggested range of perhaps \$500 to \$50, 000, with the proviso that individuals and entities who do not have the ability to pay would be eligible for participation with a token contribution. It is estimated that the total amount of core and programmatic budget should be in the range of \$1.5 – 2 million per annum.

Timeline for Preparation, Establishment and Launch

Early-May	– Revised principles and elements submitted to Task Force and posted for general comment.
Mid-May	– Proposal submitted to the Secretary-General for approval of the key elements, as well as the establishment of the “start-up” group.
13 September (am)	– The UN ICT Task Force organizes a high-level multi-stakeholder round table immediately prior to the MS+5 at the United Nations in New York. The establishment of the Alliance will be announced in the course of the round table.

³ The United Nations supports multi-stakeholder partnerships in a number of areas (sustainable development, water, energy, HIV/AIDS, and others).

14-16 November – The Alliance is formally launched at a special side event during the Tunis phase of WSIS.