

21 October 2002

**WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS):
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS
AS THE “HEART” OF THE SUMMIT**

This note, summarizing a brainstorming teleconference session convened by the Chairperson of the United Nations ICT Task Force with the participation of representatives of the academia, private sector and governments (list of participants attached) on 16 October 2002, is intended as a background paper to facilitate consultations of members of the UN ICT Task Force in October/November 2002. The aim of the consultations is to develop approaches and modalities to enhance contribution of the Task Force to the preparatory process of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and to the Summit itself, and to provide substantive input for its content and outcome. The deadline for proposals is 30 November 2002.

1. As early as January 2002, the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) began discussing its contribution to the WSIS. The Third Task Force Meeting, held on 30 September – 1 October 2002 at the United Nations Headquarters, decided that it would contribute effectively to the WSIS, particularly in terms of providing content to the draft declaration and plan of action as well as by helping build multi-stakeholder alliances for action.
2. Preparations for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), leading up to the meeting on 10 - 12 December 2003 in Geneva, were initiated with the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/183 in Fall 2001. This resolution called for an open ended intergovernmental preparatory committee, which now had its first meeting in July 2002. The committee is expected to contribute focused inputs to the proposed draft declaration and Plan of Action as well as to establish modalities for stakeholder participation. At its first session, the committee worked out the modalities for stakeholder participation in the preparatory committee; limited progress was achieved on a substantive content (a call, a heart, a raison d’etre) of the Summit. The second PrepCom will take place on 17 - 28 February 2003 in Geneva, with the deadline for substantive inputs to the draft declaration and Plan of Action of 07 December 2002. The Task Force deadline for input is 30 November.
3. Participants of the teleconference agreed that, the UN ICT Task Force, due to its character, composition and mandate, is well positioned to help sharpen the focus of the Summit, to define a vision and help develop an inclusive and universal approach to information society, with the achievement of UN Millennium Development Goals placed at the center.

4. Mr. Figueres and other participants expressed their concern that the preparatory process has yet to define either the mission statement or expected results that would be able to attract attention (and participation) at the highest political level at the three-day Summit. It was suggested that the Summit should provide a truly multi-stakeholder platform, with participation of Heads of State and Government, CEOs from the private sector, and heads of NGOs and other civil society organizations. The principal objective of the Summit should be identification of strategies and actions that would mainstream ICT into the work aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals that provides the wider social, economic and political context justifying summit-level participation.
5. Mr. Pierre Gagne, the Executive Director of the WSIS Secretariat, stressed the unique character of the WSIS in that it is not aimed at finding a remedy for an existing problem, as was the case with previous global conferences. He also believed that the Summit was not meant as a “development conference” but rather as a gathering where the interests of both developing and developed countries would be taken fully into account. The Summit could add a global dimension to the existing initiatives by bringing all stakeholders around the same table with the objective to endorse an action plan and political declaration.
6. With regard to the substance, participants believed that the overall objective of our contribution should be on core strategy of the Summit to ensure that ICT are effectively mainstreamed into the work of governments and international organizations, and that the Millennium Development Goals should serve as a paramount objective. One of the advantages of this approach would be that it would make the agenda of the Summit focused and action-oriented and would help overcome a fragmented view of thinking about ICT that is present today and promote viewing them more as a thread that cuts across all other sectors as an enabler of development. This would not, of course, preclude the coverage of issues that various interest groups would wish to include in the Summit.
7. To build a powerful alliance for the Summit, we need to transform it into a partnership-making forum among governments, private sector, foundations and civil society. In fact, the Summit should be seen as a kind of a market place to match partners and launch joint initiatives. For this, we need to ensure the participation and commitment of all. The UN ICT Task Force Task Force could offer its existing global matrix of working groups and regional networks as platforms for the preparatory process for the WSIS in ensuring a broadbased inputs and participation to the process.
8. To help monitor progress, the Summit may examine country score cards, built following the EU model that would break down the broad goals and policy and resource requirements at the country level. With commitments made at the country level by the government and a concomitant commitment by the international community, real progress on applying ICT's for achieving MDG's

within specified timeframes should be achieved. The UN ICT Task Force, in partnership with the World Economic Forum, Harvard University and INSEAD, could begin reflecting how this approach could be operationalized. The second part of the Summit, in 2005 in Tunis, would be an occasion for taking stock of overall progress.

9. It was agreed that the Chairperson would send out a letter to the Task Force members outlining this approach, meet with regional groups, major negotiating blocks and government representatives in Geneva and flesh out the details of how the proposed strategy can be implemented. The deadline for this process is 20 November 2002. It was noted that already at the last meeting of the Task Force, the working groups and regional networks as well as individual members and organizations were asked to provide their inputs in their respective areas of responsibilities.

Annex I

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