



## General Assembly's overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes

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### Official Form for Comments on the zero-draft

#### A. Your Information

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#### B. Formal Input

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The Internet Democracy Project welcomes the zero-draft, which we believe has been considerably strengthened vis-a-vis the non-paper.

We want to thank the co-facilitators for again being given the opportunity to comment the document and to contribute to its strengthening. We hope that such an opportunity will again be made available once the second draft comes out.

We have worked with colleagues from civil society to make a joint submission, provided to you separately, which we endorse in all aspects. In addition, we would like to use this opportunity to highlight the following, additional issues:

##### On Preamble:

- As noted in our earlier submission, we believe that it is important to spell out the leading international human rights instruments in the outcome document, as the promotion and protection of human rights will be essential to the achievement of a people centred, inclusive, development-oriented information society. For this reason, we propose the following:

**Change to Paragraph 4:** We reaffirm our common desire and commitment, undertaken at the WSIS, to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share

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<sup>1</sup> When specifying your stakeholder type, please indicate one of the following: Government, Civil Society, Private Sector, Academia, and Technical Sector.

information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, ~~and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.~~ We also reaffirm the importance of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, UN Human Rights Council Resolution 20/8 and all other existing international human rights agreements. We reaffirm paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 18 of the Geneva Declaration.

- As the UN Charter is already mentioned in paragraph 4, we do not believe that there is a need to repeat text from the UN Charter in paragraph 5 and propose to delete it.

**Delete Paragraph 5:** We also recognize the need for respect for political independence, territorial integrity and sovereign equality of states, non-interference in internal affairs of other states, as well as applicable international law, in the realisation of the WSIS vision.

- At present, the zero-draft recognises, and celebrates, the benefits of inclusion in the information society, but doesn't acknowledge sufficiently the increasing harm exclusion is causing for millions of people, including the ways in which continuing digital divides are severely threatening the realisation of the SDGs. It is important that the outcome document reminds us of these challenges and of the stakes.

**Change to Paragraph 8:** We note, however, that there are still critical digital divides between and within countries, and between men and women, which need to be addressed through affordability, education, capacity- building, appropriate financing, and an enabling policy environment. The potential of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to help the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) is threatened by these enduring, and in some cases, widening digital divides.

### **On 1. ICT for Development**

- As noted above, the promotion and protection of human rights will be essential to the achievement of a people centred, inclusive, development-oriented information society. For this reason, we propose the following paragraph 15bis:

**Add Para 15bis:** We acknowledge that a rights-based approach to development is essential to fully unleash the potential that ICTs have for development as well as to support the SDGs. In addition, we recognise that access to knowledge and the right to information are enabling conditions that are essential to be put in place if the potential of ICTs to support the SDGs and development is to be realised.

### **On 1.2. Enabling Environment**

- In order to create enabling environments that can serve all, it is important that we do not only promote solutions at the national level, but also allow and actively encourage communities to find solutions suitable for and responsive to their own needs. For this reason, we propose to add the following:

**Add Para 23bis:** We further recognise that if affordable, open, secure, and full access for the most marginalised is a priority, community-based and community-owned information infrastructures and networks should be promoted as alternatives or complements to national-level infrastructure.

### **On 1.3. Financial Mechanisms**

Though we have nothing to add here, we would like to note that **financial mechanisms should not only address development issues, but also be geared towards ensuring broad, effective participation of all stakeholder groups in**

**Internet governance**, especially from developing countries and from marginalised groups. For a proposal along these lines, as well as its justification, please see the next point.

## **On 2. Internet Governance**

- We welcome the recognition, in paragraph 34, of the need to promote greater participation and engagement of developing country stakeholders in particular. However, to make this participation a reality, it is essential that financing mechanisms are developed to support it. For this reason we propose

**Add paragraph 34bis:** We call for commitment to stable and sustainable public and other public-interest funding mechanisms that are transparent and accountable, to increase participation and engagement of civil society and other underrepresented and marginalised stakeholder groups, from developing countries in particular, in Internet governance processes. All these stakeholders should be involved in the process of developing these mechanisms.

- Over the past ten years, the Internet governance ecosystem has developed and matured considerably. Yet, questions about certain weaknesses of multistakeholder approaches to Internet governance remain, while questions about the relationship between multistakeholderism and multilateralism in Internet governance remain largely unanswered. To start making progress on these important issues, which is essential to actually ensuring the greater participation of developing country stakeholders that the zero-draft currently commits to, we recommend that the following two paragraphs will be added to the text:

**Add paragraph 34ter:** We recognise the importance of promoting open, inclusive, transparent and accountable institutions across the Internet governance ecosystem, that are sensitive and responsive to the priorities and concerns of different actors, especially from developing countries and currently marginalised groups. To this end, we require, amongst others, clear procedural rules that empower marginalised stakeholders in particular; checks and balances; agreed objectives; and agreed outcomes that are measurable.

**Add paragraph 34quater:** The governance roles defined for governments and intergovernmental bodies have to be subject to accountability to the public. Accountability and transparency must also be applied to other stakeholder groups, including but not limited to the private sector and in negotiations and enforcement of national and international instruments.

**Add paragraph 34quinquies:** We urge that multistakeholder cooperation and engagement is extended to national levels as the core building blocks of the multistakeholder system, including the setting up of institutions and process where none exist.

## **On 2.2. Human Rights**

We believe that it is essential that this is made a section in itself, rather than a subsection of Internet governance. Seeing the cross-cutting importance of human rights for all issues in the WSIS+10 Review, we in fact propose that it **be made the first section of the outcome document**.

In addition, we propose the following changes:

- Seeing the growing gender divide in the use of ICTs, we believe that it is crucial that the outcome document renews commitment to promote and protect women's exercise of their rights online. For this reason we propose:

**Add para 42bis:** We recognise that women face particular challenges in exercising their rights online, and commit to renewing our efforts to protect and promote their exercise of their human rights in the digital age in all respects.

- Seeing that revelations of mass surveillance have undermined considerably people's trust in the Internet and technology more broadly, it is important that governments acknowledge explicitly the damage such practices cause. Before addressing remedies in paragraph 43, we therefore propose to add the following:

**Add para 42ter:** We acknowledge that the breakdown of trust caused by government and corporate mass surveillance diminishes the contributions that the internet and technology can make to the development and quality of people's lives.

### **On 3. Implementation and Follow-Up**

- While we welcome the call for UN Regional Commissions to conduct regular regional reviews of WSIS implementation, we can only support such a call if this review will involve all stakeholders in all of its aspects. For this reason, we propose:

**Change paragraph 54:** We call for the continuation of the work of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), in coordinating the work of United Nations agencies. We also urge United Nations Regional Commissions to conduct regular regional reviews of WSIS implementation, with participation of all stakeholders at every step. These multistakeholder regional reviews should feed into the annual review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes by the CSTD.

- If the commitment to ensuring gender equality in the field of ICTs is to be taken seriously, it is essential that a UN agency is tasked with following this specific issue closely.

**Add paragraph 54bis:** We further invite UN Women to formally take up the role of facilitating and monitoring agency regarding all cross-cutting gender-related aspects and commitments in the Geneva Plan of Action.

- While we welcome to call for more attention for data collection and analysis, it is essential to also recognise that we first need to strengthen our knowledge of which issues we need to collect data on. For that reason we propose:

**Add para 55bis:** We commit to a common effort to better understand the digital divide and the full array of factors that allow ICTs to contribute to development and the improvement of marginalised peoples' lives, and will adapt our data collection and analysis accordingly. We recognise that policy making based on poor data risks perpetuating or widening the digital divide.

- While we strongly endorse the call for a new Summit, we do so, however, on the understanding that the Summit would have an encompassing mandate and would be fully multistakeholder - without these elements in place, it will be difficult for us to support such a call. For that reason we propose to **delete paragraph 57** and to:

**Change paragraph 58.** We recognize that in the preparation of the WSIS review a number of challenges have been identified, requiring further consultations in the framework of a higher level process. This could include the assessment and reconsideration of Action Lines; potential new legal instruments; and further improvements on enhanced cooperation. We agree to hold a World Summit [~~High Level Meeting~~] on the Information Society in 2020 in order to discuss such issues, as well as to conduct a further overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, with the participation of all stakeholders. The conclusions of this Review, and any possible subsequent reviews, would feed into the review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This Summit must be the outcome of a comprehensive global preparatory process that is open, inclusive and transparent, builds on other multistakeholder processes since the WSIS including that used in developing the SDGs, and makes use of online means, along with regional consultation and preparatory mechanisms. [Click here to enter text.](#)