REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS) OUTCOMES

OUTLINE

Source: 36 C/Resolution 56.

Background: 36 C/Resolution 56 requests the Director-General to further reinforce UNESCO’s leading role in the WISIS process and to submit to it a report on the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

Purpose: To inform the General Conference on the outcomes and achievements of the first WSIS Review+10 event hosted by UNESCO in February 2013. The General Conference is invited to endorse the Final Statement of the above review in order to ensure that UNESCO’s mandate and priorities figure prominently in the lead-up to 2015 and beyond.

Decision Required: paragraph 25.
UNESCO’s WSIS action: An expanded vision and renewed commitment

1. Over the past decade, UNESCO has contributed to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2003 and in Tunis, Tunisia in 2005.

2. In February 2013, UNESCO organized at its Headquarters, in cooperation with ITU, UNCTAD and UNDP, the first high-level, multi-stakeholder WSIS+10 review event entitled Towards Knowledge Societies for Peace and Sustainable Development.

3. The WSIS+10 review event fulfilled a mandate set out in 36 C/Resolution 56, which requested the Director-General to organize “a high-level WSIS event in the lead-up to the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015”. It offered a rich forum of insight and discussion on the achievements since the WSIS as well as the continuing challenges faced by all stakeholders in building inclusive knowledge societies.

4. The event was attended by 1,450 participants from 130 countries, with a further 800 remote participants. All regions and stakeholder groups were represented, including intergovernmental and international organizations, governments, private sector businesses, media, the academic, technical and professional communities, and civil society organizations. High-level dialogues and plenary discussions on critical issues took place alongside 83 events, workshops and thematic fora covering 11 themes of crucial importance to building inclusive knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development.

5. The Final Statement of the event, Information and Knowledge for All: an expanded vision and a renewed commitment, was developed by the open-ended, multi-stakeholder drafting group with the participation of all stakeholder groups, emphasizing the rich and innovative multi-stakeholder character of WSIS follow-up arrangements. The annexed Final Statement represents the consensus reached by the participants at the event.

2012-13 Highlights: Continued coordination, facilitation and implementation of post-WSIS initiatives

6. United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) and post-2015: As Chair of UNGIS in 2013, UNESCO – and the co-chairs UNDP, ITU, UNCTAD and UNDESA – developed in consultation with its 30 members the Joint statement on the post-2015 Development Agenda process, which was adopted by the UNGIS. This contribution to the dialogue on the post-2015 development agenda is a unified effort to harness inter-agency expertise in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and address development challenges in the twenty-first century collectively.

7. Co-organizing the WSIS Forum in 2012 and 2013: UNESCO is a co-organizer, with ITU, UNDP and UNCTAD, of the yearly WSIS Forum, which brought together in each of the fora some 1,300 participants from more than 100 countries. Several sessions were dedicated to gender and ICT topics.

8. Internet governance: UNESCO contributed actively to the international debate on Internet governance at the seventh Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan (2012). UNESCO organized four meetings on Internet privacy and freedom of expression, information ethics, online multilingualism, and digital preservation, and contributed to co-organizing another 10 sessions. A series of contributions is also planned for the 2013 IGF, which will take place in Indonesia in October 2013.

Highlights of UNESCO’s WSIS Action Line implementation

Persons with Disabilities”, which provides overviews of existing policies in five regions and proposes recommendations for action. A model policy on inclusive ICTs in education was developed with G3ict, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, and Microsoft.

10. Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is key to accessing and processing information. In 2013, UNESCO is finalizing the global MIL assessment framework, providing a theoretical and conceptual foundation and tools for the assessment of countries’ MIL readiness and of teachers’ MIL competencies.

11. For digital preservation to become a development priority in support of safeguarding and transmitting knowledge, 500 participants of the Memory of the World digital conference in Vancouver, Canada (2012) stressed the need for a closer collaboration between UNESCO, its Member States, professional associations and the private sector.

12. **E-learning (Action Line C7):** UNESCO extended its support to 13 Member States with its analysis of national ICT in education policies and convened two regional ministerial ICT in Education fora in the Asia-Pacific region. Policy dialogue and capacity-building activities on open educational resources (OER) included consultations in six regional policy and culminated in the 2012 World OER Congress and the adoption of the “Paris OER Declaration”. UNESCO also continued to enhance the quality of teacher education by applying the ICT-Competency Framework for Teachers in all regions.

13. Mobile (m)-learning innovations worldwide were captured in 14 reports and related m-learning policy guidelines launched during UNESCO’s second Mobile Learning Week in 2013. Four countries were directly assisted in the use of m-learning for professional development.

14. **E-science (Action Line C7):** Capacities of 150 officials from 15 countries were built in the use of a science technology and innovation (STI) policy instruments survey through three sub-regional training workshops in Africa. The newly developed tools draw on a cluster of databases and allow for an unprecedented level of analysis and visualization of the countries’ STI situations.

15. A coordinated global coastal monitoring effort has started to generate new knowledge on beaches and coastal areas in over 50 countries, including in small island developing States (SIDS), through the sharing of data in the newly launched global online Sandwatch database. This work is complemented by the “Understanding Climate Change Effects on SIDS” project, which uses satellite photos and remote sensing for education on and monitoring of environmental change, for related management and policy development for SIDS.

16. **Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content (Action Line C8):** The vital role of the Internet for the promotion of multilingualism, particularly with regards to local content and international domain names, was underlined in the EURid-UNESCO World Report on International Domain Names Deployment 2013. UNESCO also contributed, in its work with ICANN, to the development of recommendations for future policies concerning the promotion of multilingualism in cyberspace.

17. **CULTRIP**, a 5-minute short film of fiction (2013), in which the four leading characters of a videogame provide key elements to understand and delve into the concepts of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), is fun-filled and dynamic audiovisual material. It is an innovative way to promote the importance of promoting creative industries and culture for human development to a wider audience.

18. New technology channels were also used for mobilizing traditional wisdom of indigenous peoples on environmental issues through UNESCO’s “Climate Frontlines” global Internet forum and the Marovo wiki projects in the Solomon Islands. They give indigenous peoples the opportunity
to develop their own content and to pool and share observations, knowledge and concerns from remote communities on global environmental issues.

19. **Media (Action Line C9):** Stakeholders in WSIS-meetings reaffirmed that freedom of expression has to apply off-line as well as online, which was also reflected in a series of UNESCO publications on Internet freedom implemented in many parts of the world, particularly in the Arab States. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity began implementation in 2013 at the regional and national levels, and was the focus of World Press Freedom Day in 2013.

20. **Ethical dimensions of the Information Society (Action Line C10):** The 2013 “Ethical and Societal Challenges of the Information Society” report was developed through multi-stakeholder consultation for WSIS+10 and refined at the 8th World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), with the Information for All Programme (IFAP), and at the Conference on Emerging Ethical Issues in Science and Technology (Bratislava, Slovak Republic). A handbook version for stakeholders will be finalized at meetings at the World Social Science Forum (Montreal, Canada) and at the IFAP expert meeting on ethics of the information society (Riga, Latvia) in October 2013.

21. Above highlights capture only a part of the 235 ICT-enhanced activities UNESCO implemented in 2012-2013, many of which contributed directly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

**Challenges and future measures for contributing to the Post-2015 processes**

22. Many innovations have occurred which were not anticipated at the time of WSIS, including the growth of mobile Internet, social networking and cloud computing. These innovations, and the increasing pervasiveness of ICTs within societies, have had a profound impact on the ways in which governments deliver services, businesses relate to consumers, and citizens participate in public and private life.

23. ICTs and their potential for empowerment still remain unavailable or unaffordable to many people, particularly in developing countries. More needs to be done to enhance the capacities of policy-makers and teachers, to enable and stimulate multilingual and culturally diverse content, and to ensure inclusive participation. While opportunities for freedom of expression have increased as a result of new media, privacy concerns are growing and online freedom of expression is under increasing pressure in some countries in contradiction to what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms as a right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

24. At the end of 2013, the United Nations General Assembly will decide on the modalities of the WSIS+10 Overall Review in 2015. UNESCO will contribute to this process, as well as to the ITU hosted WSIS+10 meeting planned for April 2014 in Egypt. UNESCO will build on its dedicated and collaborative work with the Organization’s external partners and on its intersectoral comparative advantage to further advance the work on inclusive knowledge societies, preparing now for the critical role ICTs will play in achieving the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

**Draft resolution**

25. The General Conference may wish to adopt a resolution along the following lines:

The General Conference,

1. **Recalling** 36 C/Resolution 56 requesting the Director-General to reinforce UNESCO’s leading role in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process,
2. Acknowledging the growing importance and impact of information and communication technologies for development in all fields of UNESCO’s competence,

3. Underscoring the importance of a multi-stakeholder participation in the WSIS follow-up process,

4. Recognizing the results achieved at the first UNESCO hosted WSIS+10 review event,

5. Endorses its Final Statement, adopted at the first UNESCO-hosted WSIS+10 review event in February 2013;

6. Invites Member States and other partners to promote the Final Statement as a contribution to the overall WSIS+10 review;

7. Requests the Director-General to

   (a) continue building on UNESCO’s comparative, interdisciplinary advantage by facilitating intersectoral activities in the field of inclusive knowledge societies for sustainable development;

   (b) further reinforce UNESCO’s leading role in the WSIS process by contributing actively, *inter alia*, to the ongoing WSIS review process;

   (c) submit a report on the implementation of WSIS outcomes to the 38th session of the General-Conference to debate the Organization’s post-2015 WSIS involvement.
ANNEX

FINAL STATEMENT

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE FOR ALL:
AN EXPANDED VISION AND A RENEWED COMMITMENT

Introduction

Ten years ago, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 for the first and second phases of the World Summit on the Information Society adopted a common vision of the Information Society, identified its key principles and outlined the main challenges towards an Information Society for All based on shared Knowledge.

The decade since WSIS has seen very considerable progress towards the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. The multi-stakeholder approach and implementation at the international level proved to be a considerable asset in taking forward the WSIS themes and Action Lines. Still, major challenges lay ahead for counteracting the wide disparities in development and enabling marginalized groups and countries to benefit from universal access to information and knowledge.

Therefore, we participants in the First WSIS+10 Review event, assembled in Paris, France, from 25 to 27 February 2013,

Committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized legal instruments,

Recalling that the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO affirms, “that the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern”,

Convinced that the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) contributes to peace and sustainable development,

state the following:

- Multistakeholder processes have become an essential and unique approach to engagement in addressing issues affecting the knowledge and information societies.

- The key to empowering people for sustainable development and peace is education – education that reaches out to all members of society, education that provides genuine lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- In the context of the constant expansion of the Internet and the potential of the emerging ICTs to facilitate interaction and to generate and acquire knowledge, it is important to protect and promote freedom of expression.

- Indigenous and traditional knowledge are fundamental in building pathways to develop innovative processes and strategies for locally-appropriate sustainable development. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world’s cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for comprehensive knowledge societies.
- Scientific knowledge is a key factor in the innovation process and in finding pathways to sustainable development which are respectful of the environment. Science is acknowledged as a common or public good that is to be shared universally.

- Knowledge societies should seek to ensure full respect for cultural diversity, and that everyone has the right to express themselves, to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice.

- Global ICT connectivity and affordability are experiencing positive trends, although two thirds of the world’s population still lacks access to Internet. Accessibility, though, remains an important challenge.

- The rapid diffusion of mobile communication, establishment of Internet exchange points (IXPs), the increased availability of multilingual content and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), and the advent of new services and applications, including m-health, mobile transactions, e-Government, e-education, e-business and developmental services, which offer great potential for the development of the knowledge societies.

- Broadband related infrastructure and access is one of the key aspects in achieving the information and knowledge societies, bringing social and economic benefits.

- Significant efforts have been made in order to strengthen the establishment of the national ICT and Broadband strategies and policies.

The participants also invite all stakeholders to:

- Respect freedom of expression, as defined in the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to education, science and technology and artistic and cultural expressions remain essential for progress towards inclusive knowledge societies, and enhanced cultural diversity. Freedom of expression off-line applies on-line.

- Further promote universal access to information and knowledge with due respect for free flow of information.

- Pursue the goal of universal access to, and preservation of, information in order to build sustainable knowledge societies. In the quest for universal access to information and knowledge attention should be paid to infrastructure, accessibility to quality multilingual content and to application of knowledge, public access and building capacities of people to leverage information for sustainable development.

- Harness the potential of ICTs to help in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

- Participants are also invited to recognize the importance of maintaining an open Internet based on open standards development processes, as key enablers for an inclusive knowledge and information societies.

- Promote and ensure the safety of online journalists, bloggers and human right activists.

- Protect privacy and foster dignity to which everyone is entitled in cyberspace.

- Acknowledge the importance of and renew their commitment to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
• Respect human diversity in all its forms, including cultural and linguistic diversity. The preservation of the richness and diversity of the universal heritage are concepts that are enshrined in many international normative texts and national constitutions and legislations.

• Develop measures and policies to safeguard endangered languages and promote multilingualism.

• Fully integrate gender equality perspectives in WSIS related strategies and facilitate their implementation. Efforts should go beyond techno-centric solutions towards advancing women’s innovative and meaningful use of ICTs for their empowerment and development.

• Enhance the participation of youth, and their access to the benefits of the information revolution as key priorities.

• Continue focusing on the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, to solve the problem of inaccessibility.

• Encourage international and interdisciplinary reflection and debate on the ethical challenges of emerging technologies and the information society.

• Support e-learning through (a) the skills to effectively handle information that are reflective, creative and adept at problem solving to generate knowledge, (b) transformative mechanisms that enable citizens to fully participate in knowledge societies and influence the decisions which affect their lives, (c) the development of inclusive and open pedagogies and practices.

• Promote information and media literacy as indispensable individual skills to people in the increasing information flow.

• Facilitate the open access to scientific information in all parts of the world, especially in least developed countries.

• Encourage research and facilitate frameworks to favour open access to information and knowledge while respecting intellectual property rights.

• Continue exploring how the practices and philosophy of the Free Software and Open Source movements can be applied to other challenges of knowledge societies besides software.

• Take a holistic approach when fostering the information and knowledge societies. This will require attention to both the use and production of the variety of ICT goods and services. The ICT-producing sector should contribute to job creation, innovation and entrepreneurship as well as help to sustain ICT use throughout society. It is therefore important to create an enabling environment for the local ICT sector to grow and to attract investment.

• Make efforts to address the challenges in the availability, affordability, quality of access and use of broadband, in order to reduce the digital divide and possible risks of exclusion from the information society.

• Coordinate and cooperate in a multi-stakeholder and inclusive manner at regional and international level in order to ensure that the appropriate enabling environment is created for the further development the ICT ecosystem.
• Contribute to the upcoming work of the working group of the Chair of CSTD on enhanced cooperation.

• Take further steps to improve the availability of data related to measuring the 10 WSIS targets.

• Ensure that the lessons learned during the WSIS review processes inform, as appropriate, the formulation of development goals post 2015.

• Report on the WSIS implementation within the framework of the WSIS process, facilitating elaboration of the vision beyond 2015, to be based on up-to-date information, and identified achievements, gaps and challenges.

The event offered a unique opportunity for all WSIS stakeholders to review progress made and lessons learned. The outcome of this Review Meeting will serve as an input into the discussions during the WSIS Forum 2013 in Geneva in May as well as inform the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the designated system-wide focal point for follow up to the WSIS outcomes, when it meets at its 16th session.

Inspired by the vibrant debate at this review meeting, and the strong support of the diverse participants, we pledge our renewed commitment to realising the full potential of knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development.