



**Statement to WSIS related to regulatory principles  
essential in promotion of Universal Access to ICT's**

In accordance with the document "Telecommunications Sector Policy of BiH" it is necessary to ensure that the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina has access to Public Voice Telephony Services (as an important social category) and access to Internet services (as the ground for faster economy development of society and full integration in globalisation trends) with affordable price.

It is widely considered that the need for access to Information Communication Technologies (Access to ICT's) should not be met by purely commercial means or the operation of market forces. Despite the fact that telecommunications market reforms are taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, access to ICT's remains one of the few areas where sector-specific regulation may be required for an indefinite period.

Access to ICT's is a critical contribution for the whole society and roots on regulatory principles such as availability, affordability and equitability.

Below is given the list of regulatory principles essential for promoting Universal Access to ICT's.

**1. Right to access information**

Right to access information must be regulated in order to guarantee and protect interest and right of the public to know and to ensure a free and democratic society, and transparent and open system of government.

Access to information is a critical and has long-term implications on human development. This is a public concern of the whole society. Lowering the barriers to Internet access is beneficial to everyone in the context of gaining easier access to information, therefore every individual should have the right to access information regardless of geographic location, economic situation or disability.

**2. Affordable Information Infrastructure**

Disparities and inequalities in Access to ICT are considerable in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Internet is available almost only in urban centres.

Infrastructure is a pre-requisite for all other aspects of Access to the ICT for anyone. Therefore, the possibilities of new wireless communications systems should be explored in deployment of advanced, secure and reliable information infrastructure. These new technologies, used by combined commercial and public service traffic, shall encourage access to information services for everyone at affordable prices.

### **3. Development of Content on the Internet in Native Languages**

Perhaps even more important than physical access is the Universal Access to knowledge content as a ground for building a "Knowledge Society". Once the access is available then the content should be usable by all.

BiH represents multicultural country with three official languages. We are aware that the lack of content on the Internet in local languages seriously impediment Internet use in BiH. Therefore, a BiH Government encourages activities on an integrated strategy with regard to the presence and quality of local languages content and services on the Internet.

### **4. Accessible electronic and information technology devices for services offered**

Access to the ICT without the ability to use or participate is nothing more than lip service to the idea of universal access.

Whatever system is developed it should be easy to use and economically viable to access this system with low cost devices and devices that support Assistive Technology. The system should be based on the principles of Universal Design since it must be usable by everyone as much as possible.

### **5. Protection of human dignity**

Two essential and interrelated concerns in this context are those of privacy and freedom of expression. The Internet is a new medium of mass communications, but at the same time qualitatively differs from the "traditional" media. Differences are obvious in the degree to which it permits individual and mass interaction, providing new possibilities for creativity, expression and provision of personal services while, at the same time raising new dangers. Protection of human dignity is one of the most important issues. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states the need to safeguard the rights of privacy and freedom of expression in the digital age.