

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO'S PROPOSALS FOR THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND THE DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

A. Introduction

1. UNESCO's proposals for the elements to be included in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action to be adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society are based on the Organization's specific mandate. This mandate leads UNESCO to promote the concept of *knowledge societies* rather than that of a global *information society* since enhancing information flows alone is not sufficient to grasp the opportunities for development that is offered by knowledge. Therefore, a more complex, holistic and comprehensive vision and a clearly developmental perspective are needed.
2. UNESCO's proposals are responses to the three main challenges posed by the construction of knowledge societies: first, to narrow the digital divide that accentuates disparities in development, excluding entire groups and countries from the benefits of information and knowledge; second to guarantee of the free flow of, and equitable access to, data, information, best practices and knowledge in the information society; and third to build international consensus on newly required norms and principles to respond to emerging ethical challenges and dilemmas of the information society.
3. UNESCO's actions in response to these challenges are based on four principles that are essential for the development of equitable knowledge societies: **Equal access to education, equal access to information, freedom of expression and cultural diversity.**
4. There are four strategic objectives that UNESCO pursues in the Summit process to agree on the above common principles; to foster digital opportunities and social inclusion; to enhance the use of ICTs for capacity-building, empowerment, governance and social participation; to strengthen capacities for scientific research, information sharing and cultural creations, performances and exchanges in knowledge societies and to enhance learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems.
5. These strategic objectives and the proposed actions flowing from them correlate to the vision and proposed themes of the Summit.

WSIS		UNESCO
Main concerns ¹	Proposed themes	Strategic objectives ²
Vision: To develop a common vision and understanding of the information society	Opening the Gates	To agree on common principles for the construction of knowledge societies
	Developing a framework	
Access: To promote access of all to information, knowledge and communication technologies for development	The needs of the users	To foster digital opportunities and social inclusion To enhance the use of ICTs for capacity-building, empowerment, governance and social participation
	Building the Infrastructure	
Applications: To harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the UN Millennium Declaration	Services and applications	To strengthen capacities for scientific research, information sharing and cultural creations, performances and exchanges
	ICTs and Education	To enhance learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/183

² UNESCO Medium Term Strategy 2002-2007 (31 C/4)

B. Proposals

WSIS Proposed Theme:

Opening the Gates and Developing a Framework

UNESCO Objectives/Key Principles:

To agree on common principles for the construction of knowledge societies

Principles

- The Information Society should be strongly based on a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms and should in particular ensure the full realization of the right to education and all cultural rights as well as freedom of expression as fundamental human rights.
- In the Information Society, access to the public domain of information and knowledge for educational and cultural purposes must be as broad as possible.
- Information must be of high quality, diversified and reliable.
- The Information Society must ensure the diversity of languages, scripts and cultures.
- Regular monitoring and measurement of the knowledge societies, such as their progress, trends, shortfalls, disparities, issues will be key to evolving policies, measure, mechanisms and actions

Actions

- Promote the basic principles of knowledge societies among states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector such as
 - Equal access to information through awareness building on the importance of a strong public domain of information
 - Equal access to education through an increased use of ICTs
- Freedom of Expression
- Cultural Diversity through designing appropriate patterns of cooperation that favour the diversity of supply and effective participation of all countries as producers and consumers of information, knowledge, as well as cultural works.
 - Create an Observatory on developments in the above areas.
 - Develop reliable and pertinent ways to measure knowledge societies, and to help countries and institutions across the world to systematically gather, disseminate and use relevant statistical data.

WSIS Proposed Theme:

The needs of the users/ Building the Infrastructure

UNESCO Objectives/Key Principles:

To foster digital opportunities and social inclusion/ To enhance the use of ICTs for capacity-building, empowerment, governance and social participation

Principles

- The Information Society is only equitable if all people, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups (e.g. people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people living in extreme poverty), as well as women and youth benefit equally from ICTs for network strengthening, information sharing, creating knowledge resources and developing skills necessary for life/work in the new digital environment.
- The use of ICT should be encouraged as a means of empowering local communities and help them combat marginalization, poverty and exclusion, especially in Africa and LDCs.
- The enhancement of dialogue between citizens and public authorities must be one of the major objectives of the Information Society.
- The Information Society must be based on the sharing of information and the genuine participation of social groups at various levels.
- Any e-governance development should address all citizens to avoid further widening the digital divide.

Actions

- Promote supportive principles, policies, regulatory frameworks and research.
- Strengthen capacities of communication and information specialists.
- Increase community access by developing and supporting multimedia centers, telecentres, libraries, archives, and other information service providers.
- Enhance public service broadcasting.
- Promote the creation and sharing of local content and ICT applications and studying their impact.
- Increase participation of citizens in civic life and in decision making by means of ICTs.
- Encourage the formulation of policies for enhancing the role of women and youth in the Information Society, and the diffusion of information on gender and ICT policy issues.
- Promote the access to information and knowledge sources of youth as a tool to empower and inform their social choice, behaviour and participation.
- Improve training of women and youth in ICT literacy and technical skills in order to empower them to participate in the information society.

WSIS Proposed Theme:

Services and applications

UNESCO Objectives/Key Principles:

To strengthen capacities for scientific research, information sharing and cultural creations, performances and exchanges

Principles

- For the Information Society to be equitable participation in all forms of intellectual life for educational, scientific, cultural and communication purposes must be ensured.
- The production and dissemination of educational, scientific and cultural materials and the preservation of the digital heritage should be regarded as crucial elements of the Information Society.
- Networks of specialists and of virtual interest groups should be developed, as they are key to efficient and effective exchanges and cooperation in the Information Society.

Actions

- Increase the effective use of ICTs for better transmission and sharing of scientific knowledge at all levels, including (taking into account of) local and indigenous knowledge e.g. through the establishment of virtual universities
- Foster the use of ICTs by cultural industries in developing countries.
- Contribute to broadening the international exchange of cultural goods and services through the development of endogenous cultural industries.
- Foster the use of ICTs for exhibition, promotion and marketing of cultural works.
- Develop an international framework for the preservation of digital heritage.
- Protect copyright and related rights and fair remuneration of creative work, while at the same time uphold the right to public access to information.
- Implement digitization programmes for holdings of libraries and archives that are in the public domain.
- Encourage linguistic diversity.
- Encourage the production, safeguarding and dissemination of diversified contents in the media and global information networks.
- Support public radio and television services in the development of high quality audiovisual productions, in particular by fostering the establishment of cooperative mechanisms to facilitate their distribution.

WSIS Proposed Theme:

ICTs and Education

UNESCO Objectives/Key Principles:

To enhance learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems

Principles

- ICTs must contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, the sharing of knowledge and information.
- ICTs have the potential to introduce in the educational process a higher degree of flexibility in response to societal needs.
- The potential of ICTs to lower the cost of education and to improve internal and external efficiencies of the education system must be grasped.
- The Information Society should offer opportunities to use ICTs as innovative and experimental tools in the process of renewing education.
- ICTs are to be seen both as educational discipline and as pedagogical tools capable of enhancing the effectiveness of educational services.
- A Broad-based dialogue among all stakeholders and consensus should be built at national and international levels. This can yield strategies and policies for expanding access to education and learning, progressing towards Education for All (EFA) targets at country level and renewing formal and non formal education systems.

Actions

- Disseminate knowledge and best practices related to the use of ICTs in education and learning processes and to their impact on education systems (e.g. through online clearing houses and multimedia resource centres).
- Demonstrate the impact of ICT-based alternative delivery systems through pilot projects, notably for achieving EFA targets.
- Train teachers in the use of ICTs in education and learning as well as new forms of networking of teacher institutions and teachers.
- Promote the use by governments of ICT-based delivery systems in formal and non-formal education, utilizing different mixes of new and traditional media and appropriate methodologies.
- Disseminate research results on ICT facilitated dynamics of the teaching/learning process and its impact on content and teacher-learner interaction, in particular as regards distance education and teacher training
- Foster international debate and reflection in favor of developing internationally compatible descriptors and standards for distance and e-learning courseware, and for e-learning institutions.