Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR)

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility Statement to PrepCom-2 of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

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Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility
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Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR) endorses the CIVIL SOCIETY COORDINATION GROUP Civil Society Statement to Prepcom 2 on Vision, Principles, Themes and Process for WSIS (Document WSIS/CSCG/5 18 December 2002).

CPSR is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1981, out of concern for the potentially negative impacts on society of information technology and policies that govern their development and use. Given CPSR's mandate, it emphasizes here those aspects of the Civil Society Statement to Prepcom 2 that address support for socially responsible development and use of computer-based systems.

CPSR's primary and historic interest has been to ensure that the public and policymakers are able to make realistic assessments of not only the power and promise of information technologies, but also their limitations. Toward these ends, CPSR adheres to five principles in the work that it performs:

1. We must foster and support public discussion of, and public responsibility for decisions involving the use of computers in systems critical to society.
2. We must work to dispel popular myths about the infallibility of technological systems.
3. We must challenge the assumption that technology alone can solve political and social problems.
4. We must critically examine social and technical issues within the computer profession, both nationally and internationally.
5. We must encourage the use of information technology to improve the quality of life.

It is our view that the Civil Society Statement is in alignment with these principles above.

CPSR believes that in governance, there should accountability, transparency, and inclusive representation of interests, which is addressed in the Civil Society Statement's calls for: involvement of communities and people in them (section 3.1.4), equal opportunities for participation by women and girls (section 3.1.5), significant participation by youth (section 3.1.6), and democratic governance of information societies (section 3.2). In this context, it is also our view that the rights and interests of individual member states should not overrule other rights, nor should intellectual property rights and interests overrule other rights.

CPSR further believes that the calls in the Civil Society Statement for including consideration of traditional technologies in decisions about the Information Society (sections 2.4, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, and 3.2.2); its calls for sustainable development of the Information Society (sections 1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.1.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.6); as well as the aforementioned sections on public participation and governance all contribute to CPSR's calls to: consider the fallibility of information technologies, challenge the

assumptions that technology alone can solve social and political problems, and critically examine the social and technical issues of their use.

CPSR finally concludes that the Civil Society Statement encourages the use of information technologies to improve human life. This is expressed in its call for human rights and sustainable human development as guiding principles for WSIS and the development of the Information Society (section 2.1).

CPSR encourages member states, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the WSIS Secretariat to support our five principles as articulated through the CIVIL SOCIETY COORDINATION GROUP Civil Society Statement to Prepcom 2 on Vision, Principles, Themes and Process for WSIS (Document WSIS/CSCG/5 18 December 2002). We look forward to constructive engagement on all of these issues with all WSIS stakeholders – member states, the private sector, and civil society – at Prepcom 2.

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility wishes all the participants a successful conference.

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Prepcom 2 Delegation
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