World Summit on the Information Society

Comments on the draft Declaration and Action Plan from PrepCom 2

Input Paper

The Independent State of Samoa

Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays an increasingly vital role in strengthening national economies and supporting democratic processes world-wide. ICT has also changed the way society is lived and commerce is conducted. The liberalisation of telecommunication sectors, adoption of ICTs to improve business practices and government services, and a healthy ICT sector itself, all contribute to a nation's ability to participate in the global economy. The emerging of the information and knowledge society brings with it new issues and challenges that each country need to be aware of and a concerted effort by all stakeholders is required to develop ways to resolve them. As such, ICT developments (ICT4D) to bridge the digital divide have become a key focus of many countries, international organisations, and donors.

However, most of these ICT developments have been conducted in the developed countries and highly populated developing countries. In the Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs), this is not the case. The PICTs are lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of ICT4D funded projects.

The development of ICTs in PICTs is hampered by disperse populations, small size, small economy, geographical remote location and vast oceans. These characteristics, unique to the PICTs impose large costs on ICT4D, limit the growth of the key industries and rural connectivity.

While there have been efforts in developing national ICT strategies in the PICTs, only 6 of these countries have had their national ICT strategies developed with the assistance of the UNDP. The next step of implementing the strategies is hindered by lack of ICT skills, knowledge, and funding.

Where other highly developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe etc, are now disseminating the stories and lessons learnt from their ICT4D initiatives such as multipurpose telecenters etc, the PICTs have little to report or write about because the only country that has multipurpose telecenters connecting some rural villages is the Solomon islands. While most of the PICTs now have cyber cafes, they are situated in the urban towns and used mainly by the tourists. These cyber cafes are too expensive for the local people to use.

On the other hand, the PICTs may be in a better position to leapfrog to the proven methodologies and utilise the lessons learnt from the ICT4D in highly populated developing countries. At least PICTs now have information on how these countries before them went about developing and implementing their ICT initiatives, use what is suitable and develop them to suit their needs.

Researching ICT issues and current ICT situations in the PICTs is one of the key requirements for ICT4D that is lacking in the Pacific. Most of the evidence from these countries is anecdotal. Where ICT research has been done and disseminated, these were conducted mainly by the regional organisations in the Pacific and the respondents were all government employees. So far, there is a dearth of research on the societal impact of ICT in this part of the world.

Samoa therefore welcomes the WSIS as a positive move to reducing ICT inequality between and within countries. Samoa supports the WSIS and will participate and contribute in anyway possible.

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1   Purpose

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) provides a unique opportunity for nations to come together to share and apply their collective knowledge, experience and resources on information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create a global e-Commons

The purpose of this document is to place on the agenda of the preparatory process (PrepCom)
of the WSIS the comments of the government of Samoa on the draft Declaration and Action Plan from PrepCom2.

In addition, this paper serves to increase the understanding of the WSIS on the current situation of ICT development in Samoa by outlining the ICT goals of the government and key issues that hinder the implementation of its ICT strategy.

2   Introduction

A technological revolution is transforming society in a profound way. If harnessed and directed properly, ICTs have the potential to improve all aspects of our social, economic and cultural life.

A new economy and a new society full of promise is emerging, the "information society". For Samoa, it is the government's goal to move Samoa towards the knowledge economy and the information society.

The old concept of economical growth placed a heavy reliance on natural resources as the means of growth. The new economy however, places more reliance and dependence on information and knowledge as the key ingredients for growth. These two ingredients can only be accessed if there is a sound and stable human resources, robust telecommunication infrastructure and ICT knowledge base. Hence more than ever, quality higher education has become a prerequisite to present-day national development.

The new economy, driven by ICT is in essence a knowledge-based global economy with education as its basic foundation. In this system, education is continuous or life-long. It is borderless; therefore, ICT must be available to all, regardless of sex, age, ethnic race, religion, socio-economic status or political leanings. It must furthermore be available at any time and place. Under such a system it means that children, parents, grandparents in fact every one can take advantage of the new economy and enjoy its benefits. At the same time, threats of ICT must be communicated to all.

Furthermore, education in the new economy, aside from being borderless, is also "mass-produced". Higher education will no longer be only for the privileged few and well to do, nor will it be confined to a certain age range or ethnicity. Rather, it will be accessible through ICT without restrictions or barriers to everyone that wish to take advantage of it. Acquisition of knowledge will no longer be confined to the four walls of schools and universities, but will be accessible anywhere in the factories, in the offices, in the homes, and even on the road.

The digital divide between developed and developing countries, between urban and rural, between those who can afford modern knowledge tools such as the computer and those who can't and between the working population and the unemployed, is constantly widening.

2.1   ICT in Samoa - Current Development

In Samoa, ICTs including telephones, radios, televisions, the use of cellphones, the Internet and the establishment of cyber cafes are growing rapidly. Although this is evidence of the increased adoption of ICTs in Samoa, new forms of inequalities are arising at various levels of Samoa's societal structure. For example, the digital gap between the urban and rural villages is widening. All the cyber cafes are established in urban centers. However, the recent reform and upgrade of the telecommunication sector has seen some rural villagers having a telephone in their homes for the first time, saving them time and money to travel all the way to town to make a phone call.

While these ICT issues have emerged, the government of Samoa is committed to ensure that the convergence of ICT especially the Internet and the global network of the World Wide Web is enhanced and encouraged, in order to provided the Samoan society with highly powerful and efficient tools for information and knowledge acquisition, analysis, storage, and transfer. In doing so, Samoa will be better able to utilise such information and knowledge in making decisions as well as in solving technical, economic, social, and even political issues. As such, the Samoan government has established a national ICT committee and developed a national ICT strategy. However, one of the key issues in implementing its ICT strategy is the lack of ICT skills, knowledge and funding. It is these barriers that impede the efforts of the Samoan government to move ahead with implementing its ICT strategy, thereby participating in the new wave of social, cultural and economic development.

Many reports from numerous sources depict that increasingly; international donors are focusing on ICT as an important development tool. Existing literature provide evidence that ICT initiatives are

very costly to implement. The small size and economy of Samoa encumber its efforts to implement its ICT strategy. The Samoan government is hopeful that this input paper will increase the understanding of the international organisations and donors of the urgency required in funding and expert assistance to implement its ICT strategy, in order to move Samoa towards the global knowledge economy.

The Samoan government welcomes and supports the World Summit of the Information Society and has participated in the PrepCom 2 as well as the Asia Pacific regional WSIS conference in Tokyo, January 2003.

From Samoa's perspective, a balanced technological society is one that takes into account the diversity of culture, language and wealth of its human resource components. It is therefore necessary for all the components of our societies to come together in order to discover and understand the different aspects of ICTs that will now become part of our daily life. Samoa is positive that the WSIS is the opportunity to exploit the advantages of ICTs especially the Internet for the benefit of all Samoan people.

This paper is organised as follow: After this introduction will be a general background of the WSIS followed by some key information on Samoa, and a brief discussion of Samoa's ICT strategy. The next section comprise the Samoan governments comments on the Geneva WSIS declaration and action plan, and concluded by a summary of the key points.

3   Background

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was proposed by delegates to the International Telecommunications Union Plenipotentiary Meeting in 1998. It has since been endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly and will be held as a UN global summit under the high patronage of the Secretary General. The Summit in December 2003 will adopt a Declaration of Principles and an Action Plan, signed at the level of heads of government.

In Resolution 56/183, the General Assembly encouraged contributions from all relevant UN bodies and other intergovernmental organizations, including international and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to actively participate in the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit and the Summit itself.

In 2001, the ITU Council decided to hold a Summit in two phases with the first phase to be held from **10 to 12 December 2003, in Geneva, Switzerland** and the second from **16 to 18 November 2005 in Tunis, Tunisia**.

The first phase of the WSIS is scheduled for Geneva from 10-12 December 2003. The Summit aims to attract Heads of Government, who will adopt a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. These texts will establish a global framework for the future development and administration of ICTs. Though non-binding, they will commit UN member states to specified actions aimed at tackling the digital divide and facilitating the participation by all countries in a global information society.

Implementation of the plan of action will be the responsibility of governments, civil society and the private sector. A follow up Summit is intended to be held in Tunis in November 2005 to assess progress in meeting the commitments set out in the plan of action.

A series of regional conferences and global preparatory committees is being held during 2003 to develop the expected outcomes:

- 11-15 January   Asia Pacific Regional Conference for WSIS, Tokyo
- 17-28 February   Second Preparatory Committee, Geneva
- 15-26 September   Third Preparatory Committee, Geneva
- 10-12 December   World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva

The World Summit on the Information Society will provide a unique opportunity for all key stakeholders to assemble at a high-level gathering and to develop a better understanding of this revolution and its impact on the international community. It aims to bring together Heads of State, Executive Heads of United Nations agencies, industry leaders, non-governmental organizations, media representatives and civil society in a single high-level event. The roles of the various partners (Member States, UN specialized agencies, private sector and civil society) in ensuring smooth coordination of the practical establishment of the information society around the globe will also be at the heart of the Summit and its preparation.

The WSIS Declaration of Principles and Action Plan will become the global framework for coordination and development assistance in the ICT sector. Being global documents, they are generic but with appropriate preparatory work can also be steered to recognise the specific contributions and needs of the Pacific region and small island developing states. The current draft of these documents was prepared by the Preparatory Committee in late February 2003.

The Asia Pacific Regional Conference for WSIS, held in January 2003, was the only opportunity for a regionally focussed consideration of issues. It conducted a regional assessment of challenges, opportunities and constraints; and considered new initiatives and commitments for development. The conference developed the Tokyo Declaration setting out an Asia-Pacific vision for the information society. The Samoan delegate participated in finalising the Tokyo Declaration and was instrumental in ensuring that the characteristics, unique to Small Island developing states were recognised.

The Pacific region held its conference to review and comment on the PrepCom 2 draft declaration and action plan in Suva, April 2003 and an input paper will be provided summarising the outcome of the consultation.

Additional information about the overall process and supporting documentation may be found at the official WSIS web site: www.itu.int/wsis/ and the official Tokyo WSIS conference site: http://www.wsis-japan.jp/documents/contributions.html

4   Samoa – Towards a Knowledge Economy

Samoa is an independent developing country in the South Pacific Islands, governed by the Head of State. The Prime Minister leads the country with a Legislative Assembly presided over by a Speaker elected by members of Parliament.

The population of Samoa is approximately 179,000 (June 2002). It has a land area of approximately 2,934 square kilometres, is volcanic, and dominated by rugged mountain ranges generally with a 4-5-kilometre "skirt" of gently sloping fertile land. It experiences a tropical climate being positioned as it is on latitude 14.

The Polynesian inhabitants of the Samoan islands have lived there for some 2000 years before the first European colonialists discovered it. After missionaries had converted many of the islanders to

Christianity in the 1830s, it was the Germans and Americans who competed to take control.[1] The island group was divided between the two in 1889. Contemporary Samoa consists of those islands (9 in total) colonised by the Germans, who formally declared a protectorate over them in 1899. This area was originally called Western Samoa but dropped the "Western" from its name in 1997. Eastern Samoa became a territory of the United States of America and its name was changed to American Samoa in 1899.

Following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, New Zealand occupied the German protectorate. New Zealand continued to administer the islands under a mandate of the United Nations and then as a trust territory until 1962. The Western Samoan islands became the first Polynesian nation to re-establish independence in 1962.

The economy of the country is made up of mainly agriculture, fishing, tourism, handicraft production, small goods manufacturing, and an automobile wiring-manufacturing firm. Products include coconut, coconut cream, taro, kava, bananas, cacao, and fish, garment designs and automobile wiring harness. Tourism is increasingly becoming a valuable contributor to the Samoan economy.

Samoa has a long history of political stability.

4.1   ICT Strategy

The Samoan cabinet approved the establishment of a National ICT Committee. A Chairman heads this committee with members representing most sectors. The key task of this committee is to develop a national ICT strategy and its implementation.

4.2   Key Guiding Principles

The emerging information society holds great potential for the betterment of human society. However, it could also serve to entrench existing social and economic inequities if appropriate policies are not adopted.

Samoa strongly promotes the need to approach information society issues with a vision focused on human rights and sustainable human development. Flowing from this vision are four important principles. The four principals guiding Samoa's ICT strategy are:

- **Human Resources**
  In order for Samoa to fully develop, it needs a population, which is fully conversant with ICT in work and in play. Thus, ICT literacy and universal access must be promoted as widely as possible to all segments of society with everyone encouraged contributing to the global economy. It is especially **critical to attract, develop and retain an ICT knowledgeable workforce** who will be the driving force to maximize the gains from these technologies.

- **Infrastructure Development**
  It is vital for sustainable developments that appropriate ICT infrastructure is implemented. This should be infrastructure that has been proven elsewhere in the world and is financially viable, robust, and yet adaptive to changing needs. A competitive market should be established to encourage private sector participation in the provision of appropriate ICT services. Finally, prudent use should be made of aid from international institutions.

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[1] (Irwin, 1998).

- **Co-operation Between Stakeholders**
  It is intended that ICT Policy should promote full stakeholder consultation notwithstanding limitations in human resources and stakeholder participation. The aim is to produce cross-fertilization of ideas and benefits between concerned parties that will result in effective and synergistic strategies being developed, resulting in good governance, private sector development and effective service delivery.

- **Policy and Regulation**
  ICT policies and regulations will facilitate development and the implementation of the previous guiding principles, while maintaining their appropriateness to the people and culture of Samoa. Such policies and regulations must be consistent with local and international laws, regulations, standards and policies. It is essential that the policies developed must strike a balance between community versus individual rights

4.3   Priority Themes

ICTs have the potential to act as powerful tools for supporting human development and achievement, both for individual nations and for the world as a whole.

In this context, Samoa supports the declaration of principles and priorities established at the International Telecommunications Union Plenipotentiary Meeting in Marrakesh, the Bucharest Declaration from the Pan-European Regional Conference on the WSIS, the Tokyo Declaration and the draft declaration of PrepCom2.

Samoa supports all of the principles espoused in the Bucharest Declaration, and considers principles 2, 5, 6 and 7 to be of particular importance – these are:

- Promoting universal access at affordable cost
- Setting up an enabling environment, including legal, regulatory and policy frameworks.
- Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.
- Addressing global issues.

Of the Tokyo Declaration, Samoa considers principles 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7 of section 1 to be of particular importance to Samoa's endeavour to move towards the information society – these are summarised as follows:

1. Provide equitable ICT access for all
2. Use ICTs as a driving force for the promotion of sustainable economic, social and technological development
4. Preserve the rich and diverse cultural heritage and social values
5. Provide information and communication services targeted at disadvantaged groups
6. Use ICTs to strengthen traditional media such as broadcasting and print
7. Promote the use of ICTs for capacity-building and human resource development

Samoa also strongly supports section 2 paragraph 11, which describes the unique characteristics of the small island developing states.

Issues addressed in the draft declaration of PrepCom2 that are relevant to Samoa's priorities and interests include but not limited to:

- facilitating e-commerce including the recognition of electronic signatures and contracts

- promoting other ICT applications such as e-government, e-health and distance learning
- promoting the use of ICTs to enhance good governance
- establishing effective legal, policy and regulatory regimes
- developing compatible global technical standards for ICTs
- strengthening regional and international broadband network infrastructures
- promoting competitive market policies
- building human capacity
- using ICTs as tools to achieve the goals set out in the UN's Millennium Declaration
- recognising the special needs and circumstances of small island developing states (SIDS)
- recognising the special needs of women, youth, the disabled and other vulnerable groups
- recognising the need for equitable and affordable access to ICTs
- preserving cultural and linguistic diversity and promoting local content in material on the Internet and traditional media

These principles are also consistent with the ICT guiding principals of the Samoan ICT strategy.

From the guiding principals in its ICT strategy, and the relevant principals from various regional WSIS metings and PrepCom2, the Samoan government has recognised 5 priority themes for ICT development. These are:

1. Fostering **Policy and implementation**
   Samoa is committed to promote open and non-discriminatory ICT and related regulatory frameworks to publicly accessible networks where appropriate. These regulatory frameworks will ensure that ICT benefits the culture, customs, and economy of Samoa and as such will endeavour to implement:

   - e-strategies and policies
   - e-governance in all sectors (including security)
   - e-health
   - e-commerce/e-business
   - e-sustainability
   - e-learning
   - e-environment and above all
   - the leader in the South Pacific for building an e-society

2. Strengthening **Communications** for Development
   Central to the development of ICT in Samoa is awareness and the need for computer literacy at all community levels. Samoa is committed to attract, develop and retain a knowledgeable ICT workforce that will contribute to the development and maintenance of ICT, and in the process reduce the professional isolation of Samoa at all educational levels. The key focus of this theme include but not limited to:

   - enhancing communication through media to increase awareness
   - establishing multipurpose telecentres in rural villages to foster intercultural communication
   - understanding environmental impact of ICTs
   - utilising ICT as a communication tool for envrionmental hazards
   - ensuring that Samoa's young generation will grow up in a knowledge economy
   - humanitarian aid and natural disaster information systems
   - conflict prevention and resolution

3. Universal and equitable **access**
   Samoa has recognised that the digital divide cannot be bridged unless its people have a universal and equitable access to ICTs. To effect this priority theme, Samoa has already implemented a reform of its telecommunication sector. However, Samoa still require assistance in:

   - Access, connectivity, last/first mile innovation including wireless
   - financing ICT4D (financial mechanisms)
   - affordable solutions
   - open solutions and open source
   - rural connectivity
   - capacity building in all levels of the Samoan society

4. Enhancing Human **Capacity** & **Empowerment**
   One of the barriers that hinders ICT development in Samoa is the lack of ICT skills and knowledge in its current workforce. Samoa has recognised the urgency to develop:

   - capacity building (formal & non-formal educational skills) in all sectors
   - capacity building for all rural villages so they can utilise ICT as a tool to allow them to provide service delivery for health, education etc.
   - developing/e-learning
   - youth, women/gender
   - indigenous communities/people
   - health
   - environment and
   - the village economy reducing poverty of opportunities

5. Promoting **Local Content** and knowledge
   While ICT has been recognised as the tool to social and economic development, the fact that ICT information is mostly in English means that a percentage of the Samoan population with limited knowledge of English will be a barrier to effectively utilise ICT in all sectors of the country especially the civil society. As such, Samoa has recognised the importance of this theme especially in promoting:

   - local culture, knowledge and content
   - local media
   - archives of historical information
   - indigenous knowledge
   - local media

With the above 4 guiding principals and 5 priority themes, Samoa is committed to providing an enabling ICT environment for all sectors to do business in. Samoa is also in a favourable position to enhance and promote the use of ICT as a tool for developing and improving its social and economic environment, achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, the key barrier in these goals is cost. ICT projects are expensive to implement for Samoa; in particular, due to its small size, economy and isolation from the rest of the world. Samoa believes that this is the same situation in other Pacific island countries and territories.

5   The WSIS Geneva Draft Declaration of Principals and Action Plan

The Samoan Government has reviewed the extensive work of PrepCom 2 as well as the Tokyo, Asia Pacific WSIS Conference in January 2003.

Samoa congratulates the organisors of the Asia Pacific regional conference and participants as well as those who participated in PrepCom 2, in the effort that has gone into developing the Tokyo Declaration and the Geneva Draft declaration and Action plan. Samoa agrees with the statements regarding the need to establish the following guiding principals:

- Affordable universal access to communication networks and information services (bridging the digital divide)
- building a global information commons
- promoting democratic government and governance
- ensuring a fair, open, and transparent legal and regulatory environment
- encouraging community involvement and empowerment
- developing national, regional and local capacities for participation in the information society
- promoting cultural and linguistic diversity
- incorporating gender and youth and disability perspectives

These are essential components of a global information society that is designed to meet its social, economic, and cultural potential.

5.1   General Comments

Our specific comments are limited to the Draft Declaration of Principal only. Comments on the draft Action Plan will be general taking into account the significant rework that is required to tidy up the Action Plan.

From the review of the draft declaration of principals and the action plan, Samoa provides the following general comments:

1. **Define "Information Society"** – there needs to be an explicit definition of what the information society is. Throughout all the WSIS documentation, there are various definitions of the Information Society. Different caucuses of PrepCom 2 define the Information Society in different forms. Consensus is required to provide an agreed definition of the "Information Society" to ensure a common understanding worldwide. As it is now, the term or concept "Information Society" is loosely defined and may run the risk of being defined in many different ways to suit the user's agenda.

2. **Draft Declaration of Principals** – The current draft is too long and in some sections too detailed and long winding for this purpose. Samoa strongly recommends that the Plenary Session should focus on developing the current draft into a more **clear, precise and concise document**. Remember, it is the heads of states that will review and sign off these documents.

3. **Draft Action Plan Format** – Currently, the Action Plan is simply a list of proposed actions. Throughout the plan, there is no time frame and no reference to who should be responsible for each action and how the actions can be achieved. There is a need to rework and redesign the whole document so that it is easier to understand especially by those countries that are lagging behind in terms of ICT developments. The simpler the best. Reworking of the draft Action Plan will be a significant piece of work. Samoa recommends a five column format with the following proposed column headings:

- Action
- Description
- Responsibility
- Timeframe
- Measure
- A reference to the Declaration of Principals (required but not essential)

Also, who will monitor the progress of ICT4D in developing countries? Or is it up to each country to provide a report to the WSIS secretariat per agreed timeline on the progress of their ICT4D? The monitoring and measuring phase will need to be developed.

5.2   Specific Comments - Draft Declaration of Principals

Samoa's first comment on the Draft Declaration of Principal is regarding the *unique circumstances and characteristics of the small island developing countries,* which are made up of many small islands scattered over vast oceans. If the WSIS is to succeed in achieving its mission, special efforts should be made to target these small countries, vulnerable to environmental and natural disasters.

5.2.1   Recognition by WSIS of Unique Island Needs – Part C paragraph 12

Samoa was one of two PICTs involved in drafting and finalising the Tokyo WSIS Declaration. During this roundtable, it was agreed that the WSIS should recognise the unique features of the small island developing countries if it is serious about bridging the digital divide. Consequently, paragraph 11 on section 1, page 5 of the Tokyo declaration reads as:

> **Special circumstances of regional small island developing States:**
> **These countries, vulnerable to environmental hazards, and**
> **characterised by small, homogenous markets, high costs of access**
> **and equipment, human resource constraints exacerbated by the**
> **problem of the "brain drain", limited access to networks and remote**
> **locations, will require particular attention and tailored solutions to**
> **meet their needs.**

Samoa recommends that this paragraph be inserted as the **new paragraph 13** *of the PrepCom 2 Draft Declaration of Principals.*

In the current version of the draft, the unique features of small islands developing countries are not mentioned anywhere.

It can be argued that paragraph 12 of section C does mention the need to "address the interests of developing and least developing countries (LDC), smaller island developing states (SIDs), economies in transitions and post-conflict countries, taking into account the unique geographic features and demographic diversity of nations and regions." However, Samoa believes that the current paragraph 12 does not in anyway specifically address the key issues and needs of the small island developing countries. It talks about the interests which are literally different from addressing issues and needs.

If the World Summit on the Information Society is serious about its efforts to bridge the digital divide and thereby reducing poverty, it must consider and initiate programs to address the unique needs of island states and island communities that are scattered widely across approximately 70 percent of the surface of the earth.

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Samoa would like to reiterate that the development and implementation of a national ICT plan along with the installation of much needed ICT infrastructure is beyond the financial capabilities of most small island developing countries, especially the PICTs.

To extend the telecommunication services to remote islands, provide broadband connectivity to the world (i.e. international submarine cables and satellites) and deploy broadband capabilities essential to closing the digital divide and to take advantage of digital opportunities, financial, grant funds, training programs, UN and international assistance including loans, bilateral aid etc. will be necessary.

Samoa humbly requests the WSIS that unique circumstances of small island developing states and island communities mentioned specifically so they can receive the attention they need to address the numerous ICT barriers they are facing. International organisations will agree that the ICT4D have focussed largely on highly populated developing countries neglecting the small island developing countries especially those scattered over the vast Pacific ocean.

In this context, Samoa also requests the WSIS that these small countries be provided with the ICT tools necessary to remove the obstacles preventing them from seeking "quality of life" opportunities now available. This is a necessity if these states and communities are to achieve sustainable economic development in the information age of the 21st century as specified in the Millennium Development Goals.

Developed countries and individuals are participating today in a global economy and benefiting through improved ICT services, access, and applications. Citizens rightly demand better health care, education and opportunities for economic and personal fulfillment. This should be no different for Small Island developing communities where ICT would have the most beneficial impact.

Deployment of new information technologies as a result of development of ICT Plans and broadband connectivity to the world via a submarine fiber optic cable and other means can provide these opportunities. But it is all contingent on receiving the necessary assistance.

5.2.2   Access to Information and Knowledge – Part C, Section 2

In this section, Samoa makes three recommendations.

Firstly, paragraph 25 of this section is incomplete, as there is no verb. This sentence needs to be rewritten in a clearer fashion. Barriers to equitable access are explained to do what?

Secondly, it is important for an information society to understand and be aware of the threats of ICT especially in developing countries. Such threats include pornography (especially child), money laundering and scams. Poor people of developing countries are vulnerable to the promise of quick cash. Therefore, Samoa recommends the insertion of a new paragraph 26, which reads:

> **Threats:** Increase the awareness of decision makers, users, and the general population, especially those in developing countries, of the threats of ICT, especially pornography, scams and money laundering. The impact of these threats may create an increase in cyber crime and a dysfunctional information society.

Thirdly, from a least developing country's (LDC) perspective, paragraph 22 talks about access to knowledge. However, there is a need for "affordable access" which is not

addressed in the Key principal of Part C "An information Society for all". While affordable access is mentioned in paragraph 17, it is referenced to the infrastructure only, which is different from affordable access to ICT by all sectors of a community.

Samoa argues that the availability of electronic ICTs is of little benefit if the price of access is beyond the reach of certain segments of the population. All communities, institutions, businesses and individuals should have access to communications networks and services at reasonable and affordable prices. Prices are not reasonable if they result in excessive profits to the service provider. Prices are not affordable if significant numbers of people cannot afford them.

In this context, we recommend that a new paragraph 23 be inserted which should read: "**Affordable Access to knowledge by all people:** Where market forces cannot deliver universal access to basic information and communication services at affordable rates, government, and/or regulatory intervention is necessary. Through the establishment of competitively neutral subsidy schemes, service can be delivered to high cost areas at below-cost prices, without distorting competition. Low-income consumers can be offered service at discount rates. As well, donors and/or governments should directly fund the establishment of public access sites in communities, for use by those who cannot afford access in their homes. Such intervention is likely to be needed even in the most competitive markets, given the inherent limitations of market forces."

Samoa argues that as ICTs develop, the concept of "basic service" evolves. Governments should take this evolution into account when developing and implementing policies designed to ensure universal access.

5.2.3   The Impact of ICT on the Environment – Part C, Section 3

Rapid and far-reaching advances in ICTs are making far-reaching differences to the way people communicate with each other. Yet all too often the impact of technology on the environment or on society is overlooked. As new and exciting ideas descend from the experts and inspired brains, often the environment is the furthest thing from the minds of the people driving the changes to the way we communicate at work and at home.

Likewise, Samoa has noticed that the impact of ICT to the environment and the strategic nature of ICT as a communication tool for environmental education and relating information on environmental hazards have not been incorporated to the draft declaration of principals.

In this regard Samoa recommends three amendments. First, to include the word "*environmental,*" after the word "political" into paragraph 22 of section 2 "Access to information and knowledge".

Second, Samoa also suggests to insert a new paragraph 29 to section 3 "The role of government......" The new paragraph should read

> "***The Impact of ICT on the Environmental:*** *To promote the enhancement of eco-efficiency and transparency through public access to environmental information and encouragement of cleaner production and sustainable consumption patterns. Major positive and negative impact of ICT on the environment must be observed and expected. While ICT reduces energy consumption's, they are likely to be harmful to the environment if global policies are not developed to address the issue of ICT disposal."*

Third, Samoa recommends changing the existing paragraph 28 to read:

> *"Government's role is mainly governance in terms of policy and regulation of the ICT sector but in many developing economies government has an immediate primary responsibility to act as essential catalyst and enabler for ICT development."*

5.2.4 Capacity Building – Part C Section 4

The general comment is that this section does not address the issue of the brain drain, which is experienced by most developing countries. The need to disseminate skills and knowledge of experts to local people is also a key requirement for ICT4D projects. Therefore, Samoa recommends adding a new paragraph 34, which reads:

> "Government should develop strategies and incentives to keep their own IC human resources from moving to developed countries in search of better pay and better working environment. At the same time, government should emphasise that ICT experts taking part in ICT4D projects, especially in developing countries, should make sure that disseminating skills and knowledge is a key requirement of all terms of references."

5.3   Draft Action Plan

As mentioned earlier, a major rework is required for the Action Plan to be in a suitable condition for government heads to sign off at the summit. Major input is required from all sectors of WSIS to improve the Action Plan.

Samoa strongly recommends that the Action Plan should clearly emphasise what specific actions are going to be carried out, by whom, how, and where, with clear processes to measure achievements of the actions and a timeline. As one management guru stated, "If you cannot measure, you can't manage".

Conclusion

Samoa has outlined above its key contribution and recommendations to the Draft Declaration of Principals and Draft Action Plan after an extensive review of both documents as well as regional final reports. A background on Samoa as a country as well as the current status of ICT4D is provided.

In summary, Samoa wishes to stress the need to reiterate that "machines cannot replace the valued mentoring and interpersonal contacts between societies"; especially the socialisation needed between individuals and communities. The process of sharing, of relating, and of caring is a very important part of education and of growing up, which cannot be obtained through personal computers.

While we start our journey to the information society, Samoa urges every participant of the WSIS PrepCOMs to be mindful of the fact that our children need to learn to interact with each other along this journey, and that computers if not properly controlled, may lead to a future generation becoming socially isolated.

The Samoan culture and Pacific cultures are based on components such as communal interactions and sharing of treasures, stories, of communal laughter and in sharing of knowledge and information. This unique aspects of our culture must be maintained, but let us also use the computers as tools to encourage and enhance our social lifestyles, and not a means to an end.

It is one thing to learn how to use the computer to send and receive email, search and retrieve information, and it is another to ensure that the computer will not let our children move away from our cultural values and practice.

Once again, Samoa would like to request the WSIS committee to revisit both documents and revise its contents taking into account various comments. From this end, it needs to be understood that the recommendations and suggestions of the government of Samoa reflect our understanding of the documents. Samoa hopes that the positive suggestions and recommendations made herewith will be helpful to those who have been tasked with developing the declaration and action plan.

This paper concludes by reminding the WSIS committee that Samoa wishes to take part in the drafting committee of the declaration to ensure that the small island developing countries scattered over the vast Pacific oceans has its voice heard in this new society. Samoa is also happy to participate in any other committees as a representative of all the small island developing countries scattered over the Pacific Ocean. We have experience in this area from our participation in the Asia Pacific regional conference in Tokyo, as well as PrepCom 2.

"If we adapt to change, we have a chance to survive, if we do not, we will be left behind".

Soifua.

The Prime Minister, Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, endorsed this input paper for the independent state of Samoa on May 22nd, 2003.

This paper was drafted by Fuatai Purcell, (Samoan ICT consultant) and reviewed by Tua'imalo Asamu, the CEO of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, and Chairman of the Samoan ICT Committee.