

Romania

Draft WSIS Declaration of Principles and Action Plan
COMMENTS PROPOSED BY THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) - the world organization of parliaments and permanent observer at the United Nations General Assembly - welcomes the advancement of preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society, in particular as regards drafting of the Summit's Declaration of Principles and Action Plan.

We believe however that, in their present form, the drafts place insufficient emphasis on the impact of information technologies on the functioning of democracy and its institutions. Moreover, while making constant references to governments, private sector, civil society and other actors in the process, the drafts all but ignore the unique role of parliament as an institution with a constitutional obligation to adopt laws, approve budgets, ratify international treaties and oversee government action in many fields, including ICTs.

In our view, legislators constitute a self-contained category of political decision-makers and should thus be considered as stakeholders on their own. At the age when e-democracy, e-governance and e-voting start taking shape, it is all the more important to underline the institutional responsibility of parliaments in shaping the contours of the information society. It is also essential to have parliaments involved in the implementation of the Summit's decisions, in particular the Action Plan.

With this in mind, we submit a number of amendments to the drafts. Whereas the majority of proposed amendments deal directly with issues mentioned above, a few others reflect specific preoccupations expressed by some of our members concerning broader issues placed on the WSIS agenda. Additions to the text are marked in yellow, deleted words are marked in yellow and stricken through.

Draft Declaration of Principles (WSIS/PCIP/030721/TD/GEN/0001)

6. **Faced** with complex and ever-evolving challenges, all of us; governments, **parliaments**, the private sector and civil society, have challenges that require new forms of solidarity and cooperation and new or increased roles and responsibilities.

16. Young people constitute the majority of the world's population, and are leading creators and adopters of ICTs. Yet too many of them, especially those in developing countries, remain disadvantaged and disconnected **due to lack of financial and material means**. More and special attention must be given to empower young people as learners, the future workforce, and citizens with special needs.

25. **Barriers:** Barriers to equitable access result from differences in education and literacy levels, gender, age, income and connectivity, as well as from a lack of user training and cultural and linguistic constraints and particular conditions of access to the relevant technology, **including those resulting from the external debt burden of developing countries**. ICTs can also be used in order to overcome these and other barriers in society.

27. All partners - public, private sector and civil society organizations - have a stake in the development of information and communications and should be fully involved in decision making at the local, national, regional and international levels. Governments **and parliaments** should work in close coordination with private enterprise and civil society.

39. **Good governance:** The Information Society must support **and enhance** participative democracy, transparency, and accountability, at all times upholding the principle of legality. Information is the basis of a well-functioning and transparent decision-making process for both global society and local communities. ICTs can be an important and very effective tool **not only** for good governance, **including for making governments and parliaments but also for** more accessible and **accountable government**.

41. **Policy-making and national strategies:** Strengthening the policy-making capacity in the area of ICTs to enhance national and regional ICT policy-making processes and institutions, **including parliaments**, is of utmost importance. ICTs will advance development if related efforts and programmes are integrated in national development strategies.

Draft Action Plan (WSIS/PCIP/030721/TD/GEN/0002)

11. **Environmental protection:** Governments, **parliaments** and the business community must initiate actions as well as develop and implement programmes and projects for the environmentally safe disposal (including recycling) of discarded ICT hardware and parts.

3) The role of governments, **parliaments, the business sector and civil society in the promotion of ICTs for development**

17. Cooperation among Stakeholders: Increased cooperation and partnerships are needed between governmental and intergovernmental organizations, **parliaments**, the private sector, civil society and the media, for

effective design and implementation of various initiatives, giving priority to locally-available human resources:

- The public sector should explore innovative ways to correct market failures and foster competition to bring the Information Society to all sectors of the economy and society, especially those living in poverty.
- The private sector should play an important role in the development and diffusion of ICTs.
- Parliaments should exercise more effectively their legislative and oversight functions with a view to creating conditions particularly favourable for promotion of ICTs for development, and should strive to enhance democracy through the use of ICTs.
- Civil society, including NGOs, should work closely with communities in strengthening ICT-related initiatives.

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27. **Fighting cybercrime:** Protection from civil and criminal offences ("cybercrime") is essential in order to build trust in information networks:

- A multi-pronged approach is needed to tackle cybercrime, on all fronts, with emphasis on preventive approaches, national guidelines and regional and international cooperation. At the same time, action to address cybercrime and cyberdiscrimination and to ensure a safe and secure Information Society must respect the sovereignty of nations and maintain respect for the constitutional and other rights of all persons, including freedom of expression.
- Existing legal instruments, such as the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, offer the international community a foundation from which to build.

36. **E-Government:** Public administrations should use ICT tools to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency - at all levels of government, and in particular at the local level:

- In the delivery of public services to citizens and to enterprises, including online access to legislation.
- In the design of online services, adapted to the needs of citizens and businesses.
- In the better management of financial, human and public resources and goods.