European Union

COVER LETTER

to the

EU contribution to the Draft Action Plan

As mentioned in an earlier communication of 28th May 2003 to the WSIS Secretariat, the EU, its Member States, the Acceding Countries and Rumania have been working on a substantive contribution to the Draft Action Plan.

We are pleased to announce that our work, a copy of which is attached, has been completed. Our views on the Action Plan, which are intended to render it more operational, will continue to evolve as we interact with others and the preparatory work continues. The main focus of our contribution is key concepts and concrete actions that the EU, its Member States and Acceding Countries wish to see incorporated in the upcoming secretariat documents and be reflected in the final outcome of the Summit.

Please note that the Associated Countries, Bulgaria and Rumania, have aligned themselves to the EU contribution to the Draft Action Plan as well as the EU's earlier contribution of 28th May 2003.

Draft EU comments on the draft Action Plan

This document aims at identifying concrete actions and comments for the WSIS Action Plan and addresses the political priorities set in the EU Contribution to the Declaration of Principles.

The EU proposes to add an overall target for each of the nine themes under A. "List of issues" in order to explain the general orientation of the actions proposed for each of the themes.

The Action Plan should be addressed to the international community as a whole, at international, national and regional levels, and to all stakeholders of the Information Society.

All actions of this Action Plan should take account of international human rights standards and gender equality in their formulation and realisation. In addition, where appropriate, measures in favour of youth should be proposed. The same should be applied to vulnerable groups and regions, where appropriate.

Finally, the Action Plan should include a statement of general commitment for the implementation and the time dimension (short term from Geneva to Tunis, medium term and long term after Tunis up to 2015) to promote the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A. List of issues

1) Information and communication infrastructure: financing and investment, affordability, development and sustainability

Target: To promote universal, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services as an essential foundation for the Information Society.

Actions:

- A major effort to provide universal access at affordable cost for all, would substantially contribute towards meeting the UN MDGs.

- Governments should take action in the framework of national development policies in order to create an enabling environment for the necessary investment in ICT infrastructure and for the development of new services.

- Universal access should be taken into account in countries' e-Strategies, notably by improving adaptation to local conditions, increasing support for project planning and development, by improving networks between projects and by experience-sharing.

- Establish sustainable multi-purpose community access points to ensure inclusive access to information and social services, particularly in rural areas.

- Advance research and launch projects, at a local and regional level, on alternative ways to organize the deployment, management and operation of communication systems, (i.e. convergence and operator-neutral access networks).

- All relevant international and regional institutions to develop and present a strategy for the use of ICTs for sustainable development and as an effective tool to help achieving the MDGs as well as implement relevant environmental agreements.

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2) Access to information and knowledge

Target: To promote universal access to information and knowledge as an important element for the attainment of MDGs and equal opportunities of all the citizens of the Information Society.

Actions:

- Develop Policy Guidelines for the development and promotion of public domain information as an important international instrument promoting public access to information.

- Promote the accessibility of public information through the harmonisation of procurement policies

- Promote activities on 'Design for All' standardisation

- Promote open and flexible international and interoperable standards to ensure that all can utilise the technology and associated content and services to their maximum potential.

- Encourage a broader use of open-source software to provide further freedom of choice so that commercial software and open source software facilitate access to ICTs by all citizens, at an affordable cost.

- Consider appropriate measures to assist Least Developed Countries facing high connectivity costs in a transition phase including by facilitating traffic aggregation.

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

Target: Promote the indispensable contribution of all stakeholders for the development of the Information Society.

Actions:

- Identify a mechanism for the promotion and monitoring of partnerships between stakeholders of the Information Society.

- Governments 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.

- Encourage a positive general business environment for entrepreneurs and investors by removing administrative obstacles, adjusting tax and legal systems, minimising bureaucracy and fighting corruption, promoting transparency etc.

- Encourage a series of related measures, including among other things: incubator schemes, venture capital investments (local and international), government investment funds (including micro finance for SMEs), investment promotion strategies, software export support activities (trade counselling), support of research and development networks and software parks

- Implement appropriate policies to support the development of SMEs in the ICT sector

- International organisations should mainstream ICTs as a tool for the better achievement of their objectives in their work programmes.

4) Capacity building: human resources development, education, and training

Target: To enable all people to acquire necessary capacity and skills to benefit fully from the possibilities of the Information Society.

Actions:

- Human capacity building, a major component of forward looking eStrategies, should be promoted in particular through literacy, education, training and increased R&D.

- ICT education and training should be promoted at every level, from primary to adult in a process of lifelong learning and continuous training for all.

- Include ICT education in the curricula of all educational levels, in particular to promote and ensure women's full participation in the information society, and to allocate the necessary resources to support programmes, projects and strategies for that purpose.

- Support special ICT volunteer initiatives, (such as the UNITeS initiative of the UN Secretary General, and an international university volunteer network) and facilitate exchange mechanisms for volunteers to share experiences and cultivate knowledge across projects related to various ICT applications.

5) Security:

Target: To enhance securityand confidence in the use of ICTs by promoting international cooperation, with all the stakeholders and by building a culture of cyber security.

Actions:

- Support the development of security schemes that balance security measures with the individual's right to privacy, respecting the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and drawing upon the principles of existing Guidelines and Convention in various forums such as the OECD guidelines for the Security of Information Systems and Networks.,

- Invite each country to set up a focal point for real – time incident handling and to develop an open co-operative network between these focal points.

- Governments should, in cooperation with the private sector, adopt a specific common policy against the global threat of crimes committed using information technology – Cyber rime – through legislation and international co-operation. The Council of Europe's Convention on Cyber crime lays down balanced standards and creates a cooperation process open to all states.

6) Enabling environment

Target: To promote full realisation of the potential of the Information Society by creating a conducive enabling environment.

Actions:

- Governments should create a trustworthy, transparent and non-discriminatory legal, regulatory and policy environment capable of promoting technological innovation and competition, favouring investment mainly from the private sector.

- Support the development of national and regional ICT policies, eStrategies and legislation by providing technical assistance, making available international Best Practices and creating a network among government's institutions.

- Encourage all countries to join the international agreement(s) on basic telecommunication services

- Promote and mainstream a principle of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in national, regional and international ICT regulation.

- The development and deployment of open, flexible and interoperable international standards for ICT networking, and the creation and dissemination of content and network services should be promoted to ensure that all can utilise the technology and associated content and services to their maximum potential.

- Actions should be taken to ensure consumer protection in e-commerce transactions, notably through the fight against unsolicited electronic communications, detection of illegal contents, transparency of e-

transactions, security of e-payments and contracts, efficient access to adapted resources, enhanced international co-operation and harmonisation of local regulations

- Actions should be taken towards the protection of the rights of creators, notably through international cooperation, with special attention to the fair balance between the rights of the holders of International Protection of Rights and the public interest.

- In co-operation with the relevant stakeholders, and respecting the sovereignty of States, governments[1] should work to internationalise the management of Internet resources in order to achieve a universally representative solution

- Those responsibilities arising from public policy which are not administered at the national level (the fair sharing of Internet resources such as IP addresses, the assignment of country codes and the setting of the general framework of generic domain names as well as the management of root servers and of their security) are to be managed through an appropriate international body.

- To this end, international dialogue among all interested parties (governments, civil society, private sector and relevant organisations) should develop in order to ensure the most appropriate management structure. The second phase of WSIS in Tunis should review the outcome of this dialogue.

7) Promotion of development-oriented ICT applications for all

Target: To harness the potential of the Information Society by developing ICT applications in all aspect of life including public administration, health, education, employment, management of natural resources, business and culture.

Actions:

- Support, at international level, co-operation initiatives in the field of e-Government for development in order to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency—at all levels of government, and in particular at the local level, more specifically: coordination of intergovernmental operations, delivery of public services, design of online services, adapted to the needs of citizens and businesses and better management of financial, human and public resources and goods.

- Use ICTs to achieve universal primary education world-wide through better delivery of education and better training of teachers.

- The introduction and development of ICTs in various schools and other learning institutions should be supported through the establishment and maintenance of human resources networks.

- Enable equal access for women to ICT-based economic activities, such as small business and home-based employment, to information systems and improved technologies, and to new employment opportunities in this area, and consider developing telecentres, information centres, community access points and business incubators.

- Encourage the development of institutional partnerships and the creation of health care network between health care institutions in developing and developed countries, notably by setting up databases and interactive gates sites

- Development of thematic approaches for medical and scientific development as well as for the management of public health systems.

- Promote new ways of organising work and business (e-work) with the aim of raising productivity, growth and wellbeing through investment in information and communication technologies and human resources.

[1] Including public authorities with competence in this field

8) Cultural and linguistic diversity, local content and media development

Target: To promote cultural and linguistic diversity, local content and media development as an important element of the Information Society

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Actions:

- States should, according to UNESCO's Universal Declaration and Action Plan on Cultural Diversity, be encouraged to design cultural policies and to implement regulatory frameworks or incentives to promote the production of quality cultural, educational and scientific content and the development of cultural industries suited to the linguistic and cultural context of the users, whilst giving special attention to an international instrument on cultural diversity.

- Promote the digitisation of cultural, educational and scientific heritage

- Grant public/private partnerships for the development of multilingual software: electronic dictionaries, terminology and thesaurus, multilingual search engines, machine translation tools, as well as content referencing

- Foster, in national R&D programmes, the development of multilingual applications and their use in enterprise and administration

- International organisations as well as organisations dedicated to libraries, museums and archives should make resources accessible for the development of new multilingual applications, in full respect of Intellectual Property Rights

- International co-operation and harmonisation of national regulations regarding unsolicited electronic communications and the detection of illegal contents should be increased

- Take effective measures to combat paedophilia, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia on the Internet

- Strengthen and encourage the use of existing information and communication technologies, such as radio, TV, as well as telecommunications and print, in parallel to enhancing the use of new technologies.

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9) Identifying and overcoming barriers to the achievement of the Information Society with a human perspective

B. Objectives

The specific targets should be based on the common vision and agreed principles included in the Declaration and promote the achievement of the MDGs.

o A major effort should be made to provide universal access at affordable cost for all by 2015.

o Ask all relevant international and regional institutions to develop and by the second phase of WSIS in 2005, present a strategy for the use of ICTs for sustainable development and as an effective tool to help achieving the MDGs as well as relevant environmental agreements.

o Recommend that governments and the private sector explore, and by the second phase of WSIS in 2005 (Tunis, implement different instruments that can help to extract the maximum environmental benefits from ICTs and speed up the development of sustainable solution throughout society

o Design a comprehensive, inclusive and realistic roadmap for global development of the Information Society by the second phase of WSIS in 2005

C. Strategies programmes, methods for implementation

Target: Governments, the private sector, civil society, the media and multilateral organisations all have a role in the evolution towards an Information Society.

o Promote full realisation of the potential of the Information Society by development of national and regional eStrategies for all countries, with conducive legal, regulatory and policy frameworks and in accordance with the national development plans, for implementation and benchmarking by the second phase of WSIS in 2005 and 2015. Mobilise appropriate assistance from the international community to support the preparation of the e-strategies.

o Integrate and mainstream the outcome of WSIS in development assistance policies and in national policies, and enhance co-ordination of bilateral and multilateral initiatives by the second phase of WSIS in 2005.

o Launch a new global initiative in Geneva to establish partnerships between stakeholders by the second phase of WSIS in 2005 in order to make the benefits of ICT available for all

D. International co-operation and financing

With regard to financing, the WSIS Action Plan should be seen within the framework of commitments made by the international community in Monterrey. More specific, EU comments will come forward at a later stage of the preparatory process, once the Principles of the Declaration and the action lines of the Plan of Action are more concrete.

The Plan of Action should recommend that the international development cooperation community (bilateral, multilateral) adjust their policies according to the outcome of the WSIS, mainstreaming ICT into their activities and, if appropriate, create special ICT related programmes.

At this stage the following general points can been made:

- On a global scale, the majority of the investment flows for the Information Society come from the private sector. Therefore, the establishment of a conducive environment to this end is of vital importance.

- Contributions from the public sector are crucial in those regions which are not yet sufficiently attractive to private investments.

- Multiple source approach, the use of existing channels of funding and new innovative partnerships and financing mechanisms are to be supported.

E. Follow up

Benchmarks and criteria for evaluation

• Initiate in Geneva a process to develop realistic benchmarks and indicators, with a national and regional perspective, including those on connectivity and Universall Access

• Initiate a preparatory process for the development of a specific criteria for the measurement of digital divide

• Launch and gradually develop an aggregate ICT Development Index.

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