Report on the consultation meeting of WSIS action line facilitators, 24 February 2006

Tim Kelly (ITU)

The *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* has adopted an implementation mechanism for the WSIS Plan of Action that has a number of dimensions:

- Paragraphs 100, 101 and 102 describe the implementation mechanism at the national, regional and international levels respectively;
- Paragraph 103 describes the mechanism for coordination among UN agencies, specifically through the newly-created UN Group on the Information System, which has now been established;
- Paragraphs 104, 105 and 111 describe the process for follow-up and review, including the possible role for the CSTD;
- Finally, Paragraphs 108-110, including the annex, describe the multistakeholder implementation process, and in particular the allocation of responsibilities for facilitating the different action lines to multistakeholder teams.

The Tunis Agenda proposes that ITU, UNCTAD and UNDP play the role of lead facilitation agencies to ensure overall coordination among the different multistakeholder teams.

In order to kick-start the process, a consultation meeting of potential action line facilitators was held on 24 February, in Geneva. Around 130 people took part in the meeting, representing all stakeholders. One of the main outcomes of the meeting was provisional agreement on the designation of focal points for each of the action lines. In addition, an extra 15 facilitation roles were defined, including for civil society organisations, in addition to the 48 facilitation roles already defined in Tunis. It is expected that the focal points and additional facilitator roles will be endorsed at the meetings of the different stakeholder teams, though the facilitation process will remain open to new stakeholders.

A further proposal that emerged from the meeting was to cluster together the action line facilitation meetings to make participation more convenient for stakeholders. For that reason, during the next few days, some 10 different action line facilitation meetings will be taking place covering action lines C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, C8 and C11 as well as theme facilitation meetings on e-business, e-employment, e-government and the role of parliaments.

The consultation meeting on 24 February also stressed the bottom-up and inclusive nature of the facilitation process, in which the main role of the leading facilitating agencies would be to assist stakeholders, as well as providing overall coordination. The coordination process should be light-handed and non-bureaucratic, making full use of online tools. In this context, an online survey was initiated with the results posted on the website.

One of the important tools that is available to assist the implementation process is the stocktaking database, which now has some 3'000 entries. This will continue to be upgraded and updated by ITU. A further development since Tunis has been the launch of a website of ICT success stories, as called for in WSIS Plan of Action Para 28e. Also, on Wednesday 17 May, we will be launching a new series of "World Information Society Reports", aimed at tracking progress in WSIS implementation.

Nevertheless. some issues remain unresolved. One of these is how the different outputs of the action line facilitation groups will be reported: when, by whom and to whom? Although the WSIS website will continue to be maintained as a common platform for all stakeholders, there may be a need for an overall reporting mechanism, perhaps on an annual basis. It would be useful to reflect further on this during the next few weeks.

In conclusion, the implementation process has started well, but there is now a need to inject content and substance into the process so that it avoids just becoming another round of meetings.

In particular, the action line facilitation meetings can serve an important role in information exchange on what the different stakeholders are doing.