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Presentation

WSIS thematic meeting

Seoul, 23-24 June 2005

- Thanks to organizers: RoK, KADO, ITU.
- Commend our friends and colleagues in ITU for doing excellent work in advancing understanding of the IS and mobilizing action. Their work is indispensable for the success of the Summit, for making it a “summit of sustainable solutions” - and of course we all have a stake in achieving this goal
- The United Nations ICT Task Force was set up by the UNSG at the request of ECOSOC in Nov 2001. First body in the UN established by an intergovernmental decision to include non-governmental stakeholders on an equal footing
- Subject of the discussion today: MSPs. The UN ICT TF is a true MSP. It is coming to the end of its mandate. Wish to share some of our experience with participants.
- Two major topics in my presentation:
 - analysis of UN ICT TF experience and lessons learned
 - possible way forward

ANALYSIS

- SWOT analysis undertaken by the secretariat (not by the TF members!) in the framework of developing proposals for possible way ahead: need to analyze lessons before moving forward

Strengths - cumulative result of several factors:

- meets a clear and recognized need for a truly global multi-stakeholder platform
- relatively inclusive compared to predecessors, strengthened participation of developing countries
- ground-breaking: multi-stakeholder, equal rights!
- link to the UN -> legitimacy, universality, convening power
- non-confrontational, non-negotiating cross-sectoral platform
- non-operational, non-funding
- global reach, regional perspectives via Regional Nodes
- impartiality, “honest broker” owing to diversity of views represented
- cross-sectoral: bringing diverse constituencies together, even those who normally do not speak to each other (foreign ministries - finance ministries - telecoms - providers....)

Weaknesses

- Limited membership: trade-off effectiveness/representation; members appointed by the SG -> misconceptions re “closed club” (esp. CSO and

the private sector - “why their competitors but not them?”); media and academia not represented!

- Non-operational, non-funding: originally the concept was that the Task Force would administer a trust fund; G77 agreed to the proposal because of this funding provision, but it was later dropped. However, continued high expectations and no funding led to loss of interest and disengagement of some developing country members
- Lack of clarity in decision-making authority: among membership, Bureau, Working Groups and Regional Nodes). In some cases led to confusion, suspicion (lack of transparency)
- lack of clear policy on members’ responsibilities: voluntary involvement resulted in formation of a core group of committed and active members; not sufficient sustained engagement and, as a result, not all decisions were implemented
- Secretariat’s role not defined: members have day jobs, secretariat full-time, but what it can say, who to approach and partner was unclear. In many cases, it resulted in delays
- Limited funding - cannot do everything that is decided, secretariat stretched thin; uneven distribution of burden led to friction among members
- Agility constrained by UN rules and procedures: formally constituted as a technical cooperation project of DESA created confidence in accountability, auditing, but led to delays, inflexibility (procurement, accepting donations, hiring of consultants, use of UN logo...)
- Lack of measurable deliverables
- Inadequate outreach

Threats

- **Skepticism:** reflects general debate on the value of ICT for development (“Pentium or penicillin”), institutional jealousies, but also different views on task, priorities and ability to deliver of the Task Force itself
- Institutional resistance: perception by some that the TF was competing or duplicating what they were doing. This has subsided since the launch, but now again surfaced in connection with the Global Alliance proposal
- False or unrealistic expectations: flow of resources, technology to developing countries, implementation of projects
- Over-ambition: attempts to do many things in many areas.

Opportunities

- We now have a clear long-term framework for action: internationally agreed development goals and the WSIS Declaration and PoA (+ Tunis outcome)
- 2005 presents a unique opportunity: 2005 World Summit in September and WSIS in November - a chance to integrate ICT into the broader development agenda

POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

- Outline history of the GA proposal: proposal by the Chairman of the TF to UNSG, positive reaction, request for a detailed proposal
- Main points about the proposal and the current status of its development:
 - NB: not a perpetuation of the TF - build on it, but a very different “entity”
 - NB: not a new UN organization, mechanism, bureaucracy...
 - Open consultations brought valuable inputs, resulted in multiple iterations of revision of the “principles”
- Today: *elements of consensus*:
 - need an inclusive global forum and platform for **cross sectoral** dialogue on ICT4D; **no existing entity** (GKP comes closest)
 - prototype - Global Forums of the ICT TF
 - [Why the need: look at the example is this conference - it is very representative and incredibly well-organized. At the same time it is typical in terms of representation: in the list of participants 168 total incl. 31 from governments (25 representing ICT-related ministries or departments; only 1 representing a development agency (Amb. Fust!)); no bilateral development agencies, no financial institutions, no sectoral ministries; IGO 10 (8 ICT-related); CSO is different here: 96! (66 non-ICT). As a result, we are discussing PARTNERSHIPS, but continue to “preach to the converted”, the ICT4D community]
 - multi-stakeholder!
 - Build on prior art, the experience of the ICT TF, DOT Force, GKP and others, and, importantly, on the experience of the WSIS process!
 - Complement others, not duplicate; use existing networks, events and organizations
 - Link with the UN, UNSG, reporting to ECOSOC
 - NB: NOT intended as an implementation mechanism for WSIS! WSIS will decide in Tunis how the Summit wishes to organize its follow up and implementation. Welcome “Connect the World” initiative: mutual complementarity with the Global Alliance proposal!
 - WSIS implementation should be done by UN agencies having core competencies and mandates. Global Alliance would address the role, potential of ICT in achieving the development goals; will provide a link between WSIS and all other UN processes, summits, broader UN development agenda. NB: 2005 World Summit in September. It is in this sense that the Alliance would contribute to the sustained impact of WSIS
- *Still to find agreed solutions on*:
 - **Composition**: “membership” is replaced by “participation”; how to ensure inclusiveness, openness - but also impact, sustainability, focus, relevance?

- **Governance:** decision-making process? board/bureau? How to form it? What authority? What decisions - budget, topics, what else?
- **Funding:** adequate resource base - fees? Need to assure participation by CSOs, developing countries

Consultations continue. Your input welcome!