

World Summit on the Information Society

Australian submission to the Executive Committee on themes for the WSIS

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to contribute comment on possible themes for the World Summit on the Information Society.

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/183 the Australian Government notes that the thematic focus of the World Summit on the Information Society should address the whole range of relevant issues related to the information society. To this end, the Australian Government requests consideration, for thematic purposes, of the following four key aspects of the information society:

- Cross border electronic commerce
- The application of intellectual property rules
- Standardisation of electronic security
- Ensuring the free-flow of information

Cross Border Electronic Commerce

Cross border electronic commerce is transforming what it means to do business today. It has enormous potential to create business efficiencies and boost economic growth. This is important for trade facilitation, as it can reduce transaction costs of cross-border trade, and improve access to trade information, thereby making markets more open.

In order to realise the potential of cross border e-commerce, work needs to be done to simplify, reduce, harmonise or eliminate regulatory, administrative and other impediments to trade in a diverse range of areas including standards, customs processes, and investments

The Summit should lend impetus to work currently being undertaken in various international fora to encourage the application of information technology and to support sustainable investment in electronic commerce. For example, in the Asia-Pacific region APEC promotes the collaboration needed for effective cross-border transactions through sharing information and experience on e-security, critical information protection, legal and regulatory matters, paperless trading, interoperability and e-government, which together provide the essential prerequisites for effective cross border electronic commerce.

The application of intellectual property rules

Copyright legislation governs the way in which content can be commercially exploited and accessed over the Internet. It is, therefore, desirable to encourage balanced copyright regimes which encourage creativity, investment and innovation in the development of

new content as well as promoting reasonable online access to research, cultural and educational materials.

Standardisation of electronic security

With the growth and use of Internet technologies it has become a necessity for economies to protect their information infrastructures from attack. Attacks on computer networks present diverse characteristics and new trends. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/63 "Combating the Criminal Misuse of Information Technology" is a global resolution designed to assist all economies to realise the importance of computer and electronic security. Many countries economies are working towards improving their e-security infrastructures and complying with the principles contained in the UNGA resolution.

The Summit can encourage broader global engagement in international collaboration on these issues, based upon work already underway in international for a. As an example, the OECD Working Party on Information Security and Privacy is currently revising the OECD's 1992 Security Guidelines. It is expected the revised Guidelines will be available in 2003 and will offer governments, industry and consumers a new approach based on building a "*culture of security*" across member countries.

At a regional level, the APEC TEL E-Security Task Group shares information between the more developed and less developed APEC members on an agenda that includes critical infrastructure protection and the enabling of electronic transactions through the use and deployment of authentication technologies. Such processes could be broadened and deepened with the high-level commitment of the Summit participants.

Importance of the free flow of information

The growth of the Internet raises questions about the balance between a completely unregulated flow of information, and restrictions in the interest of other societal objectives. Knowledge based economies thrive where there is openness and unimpeded access to new ideas and technologies, but some content on the Internet can be damaging to particular groups, for example children. Each economy faces the challenge of ensuring restrictions on harmful content are not detrimental to reasonable access to digital information.

Some economies face difficulty gaining access to information from the Internet because a substantial percentage of that content is in the English language. While content in Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish is growing rapidly, developing local content is essential to take full advantage of this medium as a way for all languages and cultures to communicate.