



**OPEN CONSULTATIONS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF RELEVANT
STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ACTIVITIES OF ITU RELATED TO WSIS**

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ITU WSIS ACCREDITED ENTITIES

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a) What “added value” might stakeholders (that are not members of the ITU) bring to the work of ITU in its WSIS-related activities?

Stakeholders not in membership with the ITU can first of all bring additional outreach to the activities of the ITU. Civil society entities, as they have become one of the most publicly trusted groups, can in that sense increase the visibility of the ITU, in particular in its activities related to WSIS, within additional groups of actors.

In addition, civil society groups can convey messages which are not fully reflected by the organisations currently seeking ITU membership. Through its connections with the grassroots and with those working in the field, as well as with a large constituencies of researchers and experts, civil society can raise issues of concern for groups directly concerned by decisions taken by the ITU. Civil society groups also approach issues addressed by the ITU taking into consideration the broader social and human-centred impact of these policies. ITU would gain valuable inputs from new categories of people fully involved in the development of the Information society.

Finally, civil society entities, because of the flexibility of their structures and their direct and cross-cutting involvement in the fast-evolving nature of the information society, can bring to international organisations valuable inputs on emerging issues and with a transversal perspective.

The experience of the WSIS summit demonstrated that, even in the core issues pertaining to the ITU mandate, the Summit would not have been such a success if limited to the participation of the traditional actors in membership with the ITU. The ITU has continued to express and show its willingness to continue the involvement of the WSIS actors in its activities during and after WSIS. The development of a real and long-standing partnership with this category of stakeholders, in addition to

the current ad hoc interactions between the ITU and some CS entities, would also contribute to increasing the mutual trust and commitment between the ITU and a large number of stakeholders.

All relevant stakeholders (non ITU members) should bear the corresponding costs to participate in the summit conference, which can increase financial income for ITU, otherwise, they will increase the financial burden of full membership and seriously affect the normal conference work.

b) What criteria could be suggested for defining which stakeholders (that are not members of the ITU) might be “relevant” to participated in ITU activities related to WSIS, taking into account a) above ?

The criteria to be retained in the definition of which stakeholders might be relevant to participate in the ITU activities should be focused on the mandate, activities, expertise and knowledge of the stakeholder, which cover substantial fields of ITU activities and functions. Therefore, ITU should look at both the policy level and at the project implementation level. Therefore, specialised NGOs and CSOs with an interest and concerns in telecommunications issues, development NGOs, consumer unions, research and academic institutions, as well as organisations defending public interests have a large relevance in participating in the activities of the ITU.

An element of relevance is for the stakeholders to have expertise and activities in several countries – either at the international, regional or sub-regional level, who might have higher relevance in line with the international nature of the ITU activities. Nevertheless, the involvement of national stakeholders with expertise on global policy issues and with implementation activities in other should also be considered as a relevant stakeholder.

Those entities accredited to WSIS are relevant actors to participate in WSIS related activities, in line with the mandate of the ITU and functions of the Union’s sectors. Other stakeholders not accredited to WSIS must also be considered as relevant when their mandate, activities, expertise and knowledge come within the field of activities of the ITU.

c) What are the challenges (including financial) to stakeholders (that are not members of the ITU) posed by their participation in the activities of the Union related to WSIS, and how can such challenges be met ?

Current challenges to stakeholders’ participation in the activities of the ITU are based on the fact that a large number of civil society actors which have demonstrated expertise in telecommunication activities have currently not the possibility of becoming Sector or Associate member of the ITU because they are specialised in a too limited range of issues. At the same time, the specific – and, in a way, very open – nature of the Sector and Associate Membership modalities developed within ITU might not be fully adapted to the reality of the civil society involvement in international organisations.

Indeed civil society stakeholders do not have the capacity to afford the financial weight of the Sector or Associate membership with the ITU. Beyond this financial challenge, a large number of relevant stakeholders are not tempted to engage through a paid-up membership status with the ITU, because they have access via consultative or observer status to other intergovernmental organisations.

Modalities for their participation beyond the current membership status should be further considered, both in terms of institutional relations with ITU decision making structures and in terms of consultation with the ITU Secretariat.

A number of stakeholders have developed ad hoc relationships with the ITU secretariat and with some ITU processes. But this does not give way to a general partnership framework for relevant stakeholders. The ITU Secretariat Background Paper on existing practices within ITU for the participation of relevant stakeholders in the activities of the Union highlighted the very complex modalities for participation of non ITU member stakeholders, while modalities for consultative or observers’ status are quite simple in other international organisations. The visibility of participation opportunities for relevant stakeholders is creating challenges hampering the accessibility of the ITU.

We therefore recommend that harmonization be considered with the view to make modalities of participation of relevant stakeholders more coherent within the inter-sectoral activities and in the meetings and activities of the Sectors.

The creation of a Civil Society Information and Outreach Unit would also be an important step forward to facilitate stakeholders' participation in the ITU – in particular civil society entities.

The password protected nature of ITU documentation is also an important challenge which hampers the fullest involvement of non ITU members. We recommend that all document released by the ITU and all decision taken by the organisation be made publicly available.

d) How can existing mechanisms (e.g. partnerships, symposia, seminars, workshops, focus groups, policy forums, experts) for participation by stakeholders (that are not members of the ITU) be used more effectively, and what other mechanisms could be suggested ?

The harmonisation and simplification of the very complex architecture of the ITU as well as the creation of a Civil Society Unit should be considered in priority, as mentioned under question c).

Other proposed mechanisms would be two-fold at this stage:

- Setting up of a roster of relevant stakeholders / civil society entities which should receive notifications of ITU processes, as well as could send written documentation to be circulated to ITU members and be invited as observers with some speaking rights to intergovernmental policy processes on their area of expertise. The modalities for the inclusion in this roster would be addressed at a later stage.
- Arrangements for informal interaction towards information exchange and consultation with the ITU Secretariat Sectors.

In a general manner, we would recommend that all ITU activities related to WSIS be run on the basis of the WSIS principles of multi-stakeholder participation in which the needs and contributions of all concerned relevant stakeholders would be reflected in the proceedings.

Should strictly limit the eligibility of stakeholders, such as background checks on stakeholders, in order to confirm whether they can truly play a positive role in facilitating ITU development, rather than hinder or interfere with the work of the ITU; Request them to have certain economic, material, research and development and personnel strength and make commitment to following relevant provisions of the ITU and review their eligibility every year.

e) What specific efforts may be needed to mobilize and ensure the meaningful and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders (that are not members of the ITU) from developing countries, and stakeholders in the development field?

The participation of relevant stakeholders from developing countries is a crucial challenge for all international organisations, but also a priority for the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations.

Specific outreach should be performed by the ITU Secretariat and by the whole NGO community to ensure that relevant stakeholders from developing countries are fully aware of their opportunities. The proposed Civil Society Unit could play a very important role in this context.

At the same time, the development and systematisation of remote participation modalities for ITU meetings – as used at our great interest during the 2008 WSIS implementation meetings and GAID open consultation – would facilitate attracting the interest and inputs from relevant stakeholders not present in Geneva.

Lastly, stakeholders from developing countries and from the development field should be allowed and encouraged to provide written inputs on the agenda items of the ITU processes.