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International Telecommunication Academy

POSITION PAPER

On the Global Information Society

International Telecommunication Academy (ITA) since 1999 performs an active research work regarding different aspects of the Global Information Society (GIS) and has developed several Recommendations ITA-GIS. Those ITA-GIS Recommendations were used as a basis while preparing this Position Paper, which contains ITA Propositions in accordance with the UN ICT Task Force Address dated 16 October 2002 and formulated in the document "World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS): The Millennium Development Goals as the "Heart" of the Summit" [1]. These Propositions are basically as follows:

1. On the Summit Title

The title "World Summit on the Information Society" presumes that, firstly, the Summit will be attended by the Heads of states and governments and, secondly, the participants will discuss *general* rather than *special* issues. But here the important question arises: what kind of Information Society is going to be discussed? The information society of the one given country, of several countries, regions, continents or the Global Information Society? Therefore a certain uncertainty exists already in the Summit title.

In our opinion we should be talking about the *Global Information Society (GIS)*, which has got incorporated information and telecommunication (infocommunication) resources of all countries of the World Community. Information society of an individual given country constitutes a part of the GIS. Nowadays the Global Information Society does exist *de-facto*. The justification of the GIS existence is given below in a number of postulates and is generalized in the ITA-GIS Recommendation A1 [2]. Appropriate proof is given in the Book [3]. The World Summit may recognize the Global Information Society existence *de jure*.

It goes without saying that such a statement will bring extensive debates, but these discussions should be steered into the right direction. Not a single country, even the poorest one, is ever going to agree to become an outcast and stay outside the Global Information Society. The only possible exception – some countries with governments not accepting scientific and technical progress for some political reasons.

Apparently it is not possible to change the Summit title now, therefore *it is necessary to bear in mind the task of the Global Information Society and all its components' development* while working on the Summit Declaration and Plan of Activities. By GIS components we mean information societies of all countries. This is the most vital issue for the whole World Community. Such an accent shift would be of a principal importance for the Summit and, in our opinion, will allow to precisely determine goals and to predict possible results.

2. Suggestions for the Summit Declaration. GIS Existence

Nowadays the GIS existence is not self-apparent. Therefore the GIS existence is proven in the form of seven Postulates, with each of them explained in [2].

POSTULATE 1. *The existence of the Global Information Society is a consequence of the existence of the Worldwide (global) economy.* There exist correlative (statistical) interrelations between the economy and infocommunications (the technical basis of the information society). That's exactly why one can claim that the existence of the Worldwide economy has determined the existence of the GIS.

POSTULATE 2. *The existence of the Global Information Society is a consequence of the revolutionary (abrupt) development of new information technologies (ICT), which include mobile communications, computers, the Internet.* It should be noted that any new technology emerges on the basis of already existing ones. For the infocommunication technologies (mobile communications and the Internet), the stationary (fixed) telephone communications, which has provided the basis for GIS creation in an evolutionary way, is the basic technology. At present, mobile communications has achieved the level of fixed communications by the number of terminals, with mobile communications being relatively swiftly introduced in developing countries.

POSTULATE 3. *The technical basis of the Global Information Society is the Global Information Infrastructure (GII),* which includes transoceanic and transcontinental fiber-optic communication links (FOCLs) and satellite communications systems. The carrying capacity of present-day FOCLs and satellite systems exceeds by orders of magnitude the performance characteristics these systems had a decade ago.

POSTULATE 4. *The Global Information Society, as the Worldwide economy, represents an extremely heterogeneous structure.* The infocommunication resources, as the economic ones, are distributed extremely unevenly among the rich and poor countries (in both the economic and information aspects, among groups of countries (developed and developing), among population groups within a country (the rich and poor). The "Digital Divide" (the gap in the ICT infocommunications technology development levels) is a consequence of the "Economic Divide".

POSTULATE 5. *The digital and economic divide between rich and poor, between developed and developing countries will be increasing, unless the world community, and in the first place the United Nations and its organization system, the developed countries and big business take urgent economic and technologic steps to provide aid to developing countries.*

On the one hand, the increase in the digital and economic divide between rich and poor, between developed and developing countries is no malicious intent of the former. The increase in the divide between economic groups is a consequence of the dynamics of a heterogeneous economic system development, it is a system-defined particular feature of the heterogeneous economy.

On the other hand, the increase in the divide leads to the political and economic instability, to civil wars inside countries, to wars among countries, to world conflicts. The reason for all that is the growth of the economic divide, although, in a number of cases, these conflicts are covered up with religious motives. The recent years are displaying a variety of examples to illustrate it. Therefore, the rich population groups and developed countries should understand that the provision of aid to poor people and developing countries is no philanthropy, but is becoming extremely indispensable for their own survival.

In this connection, a large-scale and purposeful aid on the part of developed countries with the information support by mass media should be gradually harmonizing (stabilizing) the socio-economic relations in the world community, inside individual countries.

POSTULATE 6. *The provision of economic and technological aid to poor countries (citizens), or recipients, on the part of the rich (fellow citizens), or donors, should not significantly reduce the economic growth of donor countries and should not lead to a decrease in the economic activity of the recipient countries. On the one hand, the provision of any aid cuts the donor's own reserves which it allocates to its development. On the other hand, the provision of aid to recipients should not engender in the latter the sense of irresponsibility for their country, they should struggle themselves too for their economic and infocommunications upsurge.*

Aid provision is a complex political process. It should be targeted, be conducted under the control exercised by international organizations, in the first place under the UN control, should not possess the "leaking bucket" effect, should not land into the hands of both corrupt officials and criminal groupings.

Aid provision also is a complicated dynamic process, since resource exchange between donor and recipient is taking place in time. Therefore, the aid provision process is characterized by some time constant, the initial state (when aid provision began) and the final (steady) state (when aid provision ended). Consequently, before starting to provide aid it is necessary to determine at the international level:

- the volume of aid provision on the part of donor countries;
- the speed of aid provision (is expressed through the time constant);
- the stages of aid provision.

POSTULATE 7. *Due to the fact that, firstly, developing countries have (if at all) a small volume of finance they can earmark for ICT introduction, and, secondly, that aid provision cannot be limitless, one should draw the attention of infocommunications (both information and telecommunications) equipment manufacturers to the insistent need to manufacture more cost-effective (with less costs) equipment designed for countries with a low and medium economy level and ensuring the provision of basic infocommunications services.*

At present, the infocommunications market is in a difficult situation, caused by its artificial "heating-up", in the first place by the unfounded hopes for a universal introduction of the Internet and other newest technologies. At the same time, humanity will not give up infocommunication services, therefore the infocommunications sector will be developing. This development will be following two directions: the introduction of the latest infocommunications technologies and services (in the first place, in developed countries) and the introduction of universal (basic) services in developing countries and among poor population groups. But the economic potential of the latter is extremely limited (even taking into account the aid). Therefore, the reduction in the cost of the equipment for universal service provision is a matter of principle importance for both developing countries and

equipment manufacturers, since it expands their market. In this case, it is reasonable to use cheaper fiber-optic cables and switching exchanges, to widely use radio access and other technologies.

3. Propositions for the Summit Activities Plan

In order to turn political will into actual deeds it is necessary to implement at least three projects:

PROJECT 1. To work out and publish the reference book "**World Development Catalogue: Economic and informational development indices of the World Community countries**".

Goal: to provide the World Community with current economic and informational development picture for all World Community countries and to determine prognostic values for coming ten years.

Methods:

- 1) Mathematical methods to be applied (economic and infocommunication vectors [3]) with determination of basic development indices on the basis of published statistical data;
- 2) Development laws and trends to be used in order to make prognosis of ICT introduction in different countries;
- 3) Prognosis results to be used to determine appropriate financial and technical resources needed.

Results:

- 1) Determination of countries' ranks in accordance with their economic and infocommunication development level and determination of resources needed to introduce ICT in developing countries.
- 2) Determination of the informational poverty level and preparation of the list of countries which need primary financial and technical aid.

The work schedule, requestors and executors may be determined later.

PROJECT 2. To work out and publish the book "**Principles of providing aid to developing countries in order to eliminate the "Digital Divide"**".

Goal: to provide the World Community with scientifically sound principles of providing aid to developing countries (recipients) in accordance with developed countries (donors) economic growth.

Methods: mathematical methods of determination of economic growth, as well as of incomes, technologies and services distribution.

Results: determination of the balanced (harmonized) financial aid level on the part of developed countries and of the responsibility level on the part of developing countries (own resources used for development purposes).

PROJECT 3. To work out and publish the set of articles "**Global Information Society as the social, economic and technological foundation of the Civil Society**".

Goal: to provide the World Community with the document describing the GIS ideas concerning the Civil Society creation goal. The set of articles to be written by prominent scientists, political scientists, UN specialists and developing countries' representatives.

Methods: simple and easily understandable notions to be used (as based on previously described scientific methods) to describe World Community development processes, including all countries – both developed and developing ones.

Results: harmonization (stabilization) of relations between developed and developing countries.

All three Projects to be run simultaneously.

Completion – December 2004. All three Projects to be published at the beginning of 2005 and to be discussed at the Summit in 2005.

Requestors of all three projects: UN, ITU and UNDP, World Bank (financing organization)

Executors: the Team of specialists representing ECOSOC, UN ICT Task Force, ITU, DPI, UNDP, International Telecommunication Academy (ITA).

ITA is prepared to act as the responsible executor for Projects 1 and 2.

Literature

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President of the International Telecommunication Academy, Member of the Independent Committee on Worldwide Telecommunications Development (ICWWTD) in 1984-1985, Professor



Leonid Varakin