
Document WSIS/PC-2/CONTR/57-E

7 January 2003

English only

Brazil

WSIS PREPARATORY PROCESS
"Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action"
(Preliminary inputs from Brazil)
December 2002

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a high-level forum, where Governments, with the support of the private sector and civil society, are presented the opportunity to define principles and strategies that may guide transition towards the Information Society.

The Summit must address the needs of developing countries, supporting them in the accomplishment of the United Nations Millennium Summit Declaration goals. ICT's should empower developing countries in their national efforts to reduce inequality and overcome poverty, while modernizing the economy on an inclusive and competitive basis.

II) The Summit Preparatory Process

(Transparency)

Preparations for the WSIS, and the Summit itself, should be transparent and democratic, respecting the intergovernmental nature of the meeting. They should follow procedures that facilitate the active participation of developing countries. Predictability must be guaranteed through an agreed schedule of formal meetings and working documents.

(Informal meetings)

It is difficult for government officials from developing countries to participate in informal meetings convened at short notice, and scattered throughout different venues and fora. There is additional burden if the Secretariat or member countries present new texts for debate at each session, ignoring previously examined documents or statements, particularly those from developing countries, such as positions on the HLOC document about themes and issues, among others.

(Documents)

Only documents analyzed, debated and agreed to in formal PrepCom meetings should be considered official. Each subsequent phase must be based on them with clear indications regarding agreed and non-agreed text, so that the process can move on in a linear, consensual and constructive way.

(Other inputs)

It must be highlighted that inputs presented by other International Organizations, including ITU itself, the private sector and civil societies cannot replace documents negotiated in the Preparatory Committee, nor can they be automatically incorporated therein, without careful consideration and agreement among government officials in formal PrepCom meetings.

(Decision-making)

Decisions concerning the following issues should be taken only during formal PrepCom sessions:

- I) Themes and possible outcomes of the Summit;
- II) Working documents of the WSIS;
- III) Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action;
- IV) Use of documents originated in regional and other preparatory conferences;
- V) Use of documents originated in civil society or the private sector.

(PrepCom)

Work initiated in PrepCom-I must be followed through and given full attention; particularly the document entitled "Principles guiding the preparatory work and the WSIS (Document WSIS/PC-1/10-E)".

(Basic principle)

The principle according to which the Summit must be development-oriented should guide all steps of the preparatory process, themes and Summit outcomes, so as to make the WSIS relevant for developing and developed countries alike.

III) General Framework and Basis for the Declaration of Principles

Member countries were invited to present preliminary inputs to an informal group created under the responsibility of the PrepCom Chair. The group will be given the task of preparing suggestions that could serve as a basis for discussions on a draft declaration of principles and program of action.

The Brazilian Government therefore would like to contribute with inputs and highlight important aspects that could be useful in the preparation of those working documents.

Regarding the Declaration of Principles Brazil would support texts built around the following major points:

- I) Fully development-oriented concepts, attuned to the central objective of assisting developing countries and the international community in their efforts to attain the goals set by the Millennium Summit Declaration, clearly reflecting the terms under which the WSIS was convened.
- II) The central role of States in promoting social inclusion through ICTs for development. The private sector and NGOs could act as partners in this endeavor, through clearly defined social responsibilities and cost sharing in the development of infrastructure, relevant content and ICT mainstreaming.
- III) UNGA Resolution 56/183.
- IV) PrepCom-I document WSIS/PC-1/10-E – "Principles guiding the preparatory work and the WSIS".

V) Positions from Latin American, Caribbean and developing countries in general contained in the following documents:

i) The Florianópolis Declaration of June 2001 regarding UNESCO'S III International Congress on Cyberspace's Ethical, Legal and Social Challenges, signed by a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries;

ii) The Itacuruçá Declaration, of October 2000, on "The Right to Universal Access to Information in the 21st Century: Ethical, Legal and Societal Challenges posed by the Information Society to Latin America and the Caribbean", also adopted by Latin American and Caribbean countries; and

iii) The Rio de Janeiro Declaration on ICTs for Development, adopted by representatives of 28 developing countries from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, gathered in the city of Rio de Janeiro, on June of 2001 (views for the ECOSOC and the G-8 on how to harness the developmental opportunities of ICTs).

IV) Themes and issues for the Declaration of Principles

(More than just technology)

Information Society is more than just technology, and should be defined as a development oriented concept based on the idea of using ICTs as tools for the social and economic progress of countries, under new and enhanced forms of international cooperation and through innovative partnerships involving governments, the private sector, international organizations and civil society.

Nonetheless, R&D is a very important component in determining access, availability and use of ICTs. Therefore, developing countries should be supported in their efforts towards attaining a level of endogenous technological capacity more commensurate with those of developed countries, in this way reducing both the digital and developmental divides, while creating new opportunities for sustainable growth.

(Instrument of change in the public interest)

ICTs can be a powerful instrument of change in the emerging knowledge economy. They promote new forms of organization and production and the technological infrastructure for globalization. Access to ICTs and the regulation of the digital revolution will tend to redefine the way in which countries position themselves within the world economic and political system as well as the interaction among individuals, cultures, citizenship and the exercise of power by States and corporations. Knowledge will be an increasingly important determinant of competitiveness in the global economy. Access to it should be open in the general interest of the public, particularly in developing countries, as a means towards bridging the digital divide.

(Development leapfrogging)

ICT mainstreaming into public policies and digital inclusion programs may be a window of opportunity in the promotion of development leapfrogging for countries of the South. Such are the magnitude of international expectations. Progress, however, must be benchmarked and measured against concrete economic and social goals in such areas as education,

health, employment, job training, poverty and inequality reduction, citizenship, government transparency and efficiency and the creation of stronger and fairer democratic societies. ICT density indicators are not as efficient or as meaningful in measuring a country's progress towards the information society.

(Reducing the digital divide)

The international community must tackle the ever-increasing digital divide between developed and developing countries, which feeds on a pre-existing historical divide of a social and economic nature. If left to their own course strictly under the influence of market forces, ICTs may actually deepen social inequalities within countries, and widen the gap between developed and developing nations.

(National strategies)

States have an important role to play in promoting universal access to the information society. Developing countries should formulate and adopt a national vision of the Information Society, designing and implementing ICT-strategies appropriate to their circumstances and national interests.

Civil society and the private sector should be involved in the implementation of national policies, complementing state initiatives in their respective areas of competence and sharing the burden of costs and the social responsibilities involved.

Developing countries must be aware that mainstreaming ICTs into public policies, supported by many in theory, could lead to a surge in ICT imports and consumption, pressuring their balance of payments and promoting "de-industrialization", without necessarily producing the desired social and economic benefits. Appropriate national policies must be sought to prevent this from happening.

(ICTs not an end in themselves)

ICTs in themselves and the unregulated global expansion of ICT infrastructure will not automatically promote development. If guided by market mechanisms alone they entail a serious risk of widening the digital divide between developed and developing countries, creating new forms of exclusion and barriers to development, trade and technology.

(Decreasing participation of developing countries in the new economy)

During the past decade many developing countries have made significant progress in curbing fiscal unbalances, reducing inflation, increasing the pace of export growth, pursuing regional integration processes, attracting foreign direct investment and resuming economic growth. These efforts, however, have been insufficient to overcome inequality, poverty and exclusion. Most developing economies continue to face pressing problems related to low savings and investment rates, sluggish job creation, external vulnerability and fragility in their financial systems. They are still faced with decreasing participation in international trade as a whole, especially in the more dynamic technology intensive segments, as the international economy moves from its reliance on the traditional factors of production to a knowledge and ICT intensive paradigm. This situation requires close analysis, new thinking, and new forms of international action with a view to redressing these basic asymmetries that prevent developing countries from reaping the benefits of globalization under the multilateral rule-based trading system.

(Internet Governance)

Internet has evolved into a global public good and its governance should constitute a core issue of the Information Society agenda. Developing countries should have full access to and take part in all decision-making bodies and processes concerning the structure and functioning of the cyberspace, within which public, private and non-governmental agents will increasingly conduct their social and economic activities.

(The right to access and privacy issues)

Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate in the information society and no one should be excluded from the benefits it offers. Information and communication rights, including the right to access information and knowledge should be better defined and developed, so as to become part of basic human rights. The right to individual privacy must be supported and protected.

(Information Network Security)

Information security is a relevant and sensitive issue to be considered under the appropriate context, taking into account existing as well as evolving national policies, laws and regulations. Concerns with broader international security issues should not override the development-oriented focus of the WSIS.

(Capacity-building and “positive globalization”)

The shared aspirations of developing countries to become full-fledged members of the information society on an efficient, effective and sustainable basis, within the framework of the global knowledge economy, must be taken into account.

The positive integration of developing countries into the knowledge economy depends largely on capacity building in the areas of education, technology, know-how and information. These are quickly becoming major factors in determining development, competitiveness, and the flow of trade, services and investments. Developing countries must be given greater access to these resources, including financial support from multilateral agencies.

(International Cooperation and Transfer of Technology)

The private sector and many NGOs seem to be more familiar with the issue of ICTs and have a better grasp of the extent to which this new world of networking and technological convergence will impact on political and economic international relations. Developing countries' governments are the ones most in need of enhancing their knowledge and understanding about advances in the digital revolution and their implications for public policies, risks and opportunities for development, and possible new solutions to such challenges as social inclusion, inequality and poverty reduction.

Innovative cooperation mechanisms, better suited to the North-South and South-South transfer of applied ICTs are urgently needed. Traditional schemes of cooperation are not always adequate for financing digital opportunity projects and programs. Traditional cooperation, in some instances, may actually lead to reverse forms of technology transfers, by way of a South-North brain drain and the commercial development and application in the North of basic science produced at high costs in developing countries.

(Democratic Governance)

Democratic government and the rule of law should remain fundamental values in the transition towards the information society.

V) Framework for the Plan of Action

The Plan of Action should be adaptable to each country's national characteristics, needs and values. It should emphasize the key role of the public sector in the formulation and implementation of ICT related policies, in partnership with international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

The Plan of Action must focus on the social and economical goals of the Millennium Summit Declaration.

(Thematic areas)

Information Technology has emerged as an issue for international debate fairly recently. Many still treat it under purely technical approaches, limiting discussions to matters of bandwidth, accessibility, communication infrastructure and so on. This is clearly not sufficient. The Plan of Action should be organized around broad thematic areas of public policies that are particularly relevant to developing countries, such as education, health, employment, government efficiency and transparency, local content, social inclusion and the promotion of research, science, technology and innovation. Better connectivity infrastructure, however, is also a fundamental objective.

(Participation of developing countries and the responsibility of other stakeholders)

Measures to overcome the digital divide should reflect a consensus and highlight the growing social responsibility of enterprises.

Plan of Action implementation mechanisms should favor intergovernmental supervision and control, thereby facilitating the participation and engagement of developing countries. Matrix type mechanisms such as the one adopted by the G-8 can lead to excessive fragmentation of the international ICT agenda, breaking it into multiple topics under the responsibility of different actors and fora. Developing countries would not have sufficient human and financial resources to participate fully in such complex schemes. It would be advisable to have a single body in charge of overseeing implementation of the Plan of Action.

(Universal Access)

Universal and affordable access to ICTs remains one of the biggest challenges for bridging the digital divide.

The design, financing and implementation of programs with the objective of providing access and connectivity to excluded populations of developing countries should be conducted under the guidance of competent national authorities, in partnership with international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

(Performance measurements / benchmarking)

Performance measurement is critical. Adequate planning at the outset for benchmarking of results will provide a basis for all sectors involved to monitor progress against agreed goals and to adjust their activities to ensure that they are met.

Appropriate indicators and benchmarking should clarify the magnitude of the digital divide, and keep it under regular assessment, with the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of international cooperation and transfer of technology mechanisms.

New indicators/methodologies should be studied and researched with a view to improving assessment of ITC impact, with particular attention to their applicability in regards to the different levels of social and economic development and national contexts.

Methods for quantifying the digital divide, therefore, cannot be based solely on ICT density, infrastructure or consumption, but must track global progress in the use of ICTs to achieve the UN Millennium Declaration's social and development goals.

(Scope)

The Summit Plan of Action must be balanced and comprehensive in scope and reflect the concerns, positions and national interests of all developing countries, while addressing also those of a single sub-region or continent.

VI) Important elements in the Plan of Action**(Financing)**

The WSIS should signal the importance of new and additional sources of funding and their implementation mechanisms, in order to support national ICT for development strategies, including ICT infrastructure.

Funding should also be based on contributions from developed countries, International Organizations, NGOs and the private sector.

(Infrastructure)

Infrastructure is central to digital inclusion and is, perhaps, the most critical step in national ICT policy, requiring involvement of regulatory bodies and the private sector.

Reliable and affordable access to information by all, and the development of on-line services relevant to the economy and the country at large depend on infrastructure. Research and investments should be promoted through public and private sector partnerships.

National policies should also promote connectivity in under-served areas through regulations and/or private sector incentives and in coordination with the civil society.

Infrastructure development is likely to rely on telecommunications regulatory agencies and private sector support.

The WSIS should encourage R&D projects and adaptation of technologies to local needs and conditions. To this end, governments should contribute to the development of technology-based firms by creating such mechanisms as venture capital funds, technology

incentive zones and business incubators with the participation of academic institutions, research centers and the private sector, while also promoting their national, regional and international integration through the use of advanced research and development networks, and appropriate funding facilities.

(Regulatory framework)

To maximize the economic and social benefits of the "Information Society", developing countries need to create a clear and effective legal, regulatory and policy environment, suited to their national characteristics and needs. The promotion of local technological development and digital inclusion should be factored into national policies.

The WSIS should play no more than a recommendatory or cooperative role in assisting governments in the task of elaborating a regulatory framework for the development of ICTs.

The design and implementation of policy for development based upon the utilization of ICTs should be guided by principles of equity and universality, such as access for everyone everywhere, at a cost truly within the reach of the public.

Policies should be conceived and implemented with the participation of civil society and the private sector, taking into account the public interest.

Incentives for the development of national and regional content can play an important role to promote, diffuse and protect cultural identities.

(Education)

The development of human capital is a key component of the Information Society.

Technological change will require the progressive integration of ICT related skills and notions into national basic education curricula, as well as specific programs for on-the-job training and long distance learning. The Plan of Action should address major existing problems in developing countries such as access to education and inadequate educational content and teaching methods.

Particular attention should be given to children and the means of improving their perspectives for the future through technology enhanced or supported education, adaptation of curricula to the changing requirements of the job market and skills programs for digital literacy and technical capacitation.

Actions should aim at promoting universal access to knowledge via high quality education, including distance learning for under-served areas, non-formal education and teacher training adapted to the specificities of each region. Special projects for citizens in active use of ICTs, for the achievement of broader digital literacy and the creation of a culture of life-long learning in ICT deployment are also very important initiatives.

Clear strategies must be developed in all countries, taking into account different regional structures, with the aim of ensuring that all citizens have the knowledge necessary to live, work, and develop their potential in the new knowledge society, while understanding that the use of ICTs and, in particular, Internet access are not luxuries or a more effective path to consumption, but tools and vehicles for increasing access to high quality education, welfare and citizenship.

ICTs can accelerate the education of marginalized population groups and those living in extreme poverty, with the support of International Organizations, NGO's and the private sector, stimulating the creation of local opportunities.

(Health)

ICTs can make sound scientific and technical information available to health workers. Telehealth can connect remote populations and under-served groups to better services, thereby complementing traditional forms of public health care.

Health services in most developing countries are concentrated in urban areas, being far and fewer in rural, remote or poor regions. This represents a profound imbalance between urban-rural and rich-poor areas in terms of availability, quality, density of specialists, facilities and more advanced treatments.

Technological convergence supports services, at affordable costs, which have the potential to improve health care, decentralizing and expanding their coverage to populations that previously did not have access to them because they lived in remote areas, where medical staff and facilities were unavailable.

The WSIS Plan of Action should promote greater access to information networks for Governments, health professionals and institutions, industry and civil society, through international cooperation initiatives and the creation of specific funds.

(Employment)

ICTs have the potential to foster economic growth and boost job creation. ICTs promote corporate innovation and modernization, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, providing access to new business opportunities, and thereby facilitating the creation of new and better employment.

The portion of a country's population which has the potential to be economically-active and, in particular, that part of the population whose access to the labor market is restricted owing to unemployment, underemployment, age, health, or social status can greatly benefit from the potential of ICTs. Youth employment is of special relevance to developing countries due to nature of their population dynamics.

ICTs-led transformations, however, may cause the suppression of many employment posts, in particular those associated with traditional means of managing information. Providing unemployed workers with the necessary educational and economic means towards their integration into the information society is a task to be undertaken by Governments, in partnership with the private sector, civil society and international organizations. International financial resources should be made available to help developing countries to address these problems.

ICTs imply restructuring and reengineering of enterprises, modifying the concept of employment by facilitating and streamlining the interface between employers and employees, or between those seeking and those offering personal services. Countries, in particular developing ones, need to modernize their legal, regulatory and policy environment in order to maximize the economic and social benefits of the Information Society, while preserving fundamental labor rights and guarantees.