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## DRAFT ACTION PLAN

BASED ON DISCUSSIONS IN THE WORKING GROUP OF SUB-COMMITTEE 2

### ACTION PLAN

1. The Information Society is an evolving concept, the realisation of which is driven by all societies - and in this process all of them can learn from each other. At present, the Information Society has reached different levels of development across the regions and countries of the world. As such, it would be necessary and more effective to design a flexible Action Plan which can be used as a reference framework and as a source of guidance and inspiration at regional and national levels.

#### A. List of issues

***1) Information and communication infrastructure: financing and investment, affordability, development, and sustainability***

2. Our countries, aware of the need to generate equal opportunities for access and use of information and communication technologies, are committed to taking action to overcome the digital divide, which reflects and is a factor in the differences that exist between and within countries in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects, education, health and access to knowledge.

3. In order to achieve affordable and universal access it is important to enable existing and new technologies to provide connectivity to all, in particular through institutions accessible to the public such as schools, libraries, post offices and multi-purpose community centres. Special attention should be paid to:

- how ICTs can benefit the disadvantaged, through innovative initiatives;
- the study and promotion of relevant solutions adapted to the environment for ICTs in the rural areas;
- establishment of public access points and the creation of IP backbones using innovative communication infrastructure.

4. The development of the Information Society must be based on platforms of internationally interoperable technical standards, accessible for all, and technological innovation of ICTs, as well as systems to promote the exchange of knowledge at global, regional and subregional levels through any media. As a sharp increase in the volume of international and regional Internet traffic is

anticipated, it is important to strengthen regional and international broadband network infrastructure to provide the capacity to match the needs of countries and their citizens.

5 Community information and communication centres are critical to ensure inclusive access to information and social services, particularly in rural areas. Universal access policies shall promote the best possible level of connectivity at a reasonable cost for under-served areas. Technological convergence must be monitored with a view to integrating traditional and new ICTs in order to create alternative forms of access that can help narrow the digital divide. The creation and provision of low-cost access equipment and multi-purpose community access points shall be an integral part of the agenda for reducing the digital divide.

6 The optimization of connections among major information networks should be promoted through the creation of regional traffic hubs to reduce interconnection costs and allow the penetration of access networks to be broadened. Fees for the use of networks and infrastructure shall be set on the basis of objective, non-discriminatory parameters.

7 Regional ICT backbones should be implemented to facilitate exchange between countries and avoid the hub and spoke effect where information leaves the region and returns after transiting through other regions. The development of the infrastructure necessary for connectivity requires complementarities between determined government policies to ensure connectivity and private sector participation. Steps towards liberalization, privatization and competition, and the removal of excessive levels of tariffs are essential.

## ***2) Access to information and knowledge***

### ***3) The role of governments, the business sector and civil society in the promotion of ICTs for development***

8 The full and effective involvement of all stakeholders is vital in developing new ICT applications. The role, responsibilities and goals of each stakeholder should be clearly defined

9 The public sector should explore innovative ways to correct market failures and bring the information society to all sectors of the economy and society, especially to those living in poverty. The private sector plays an important role in the development and diffusion of ICTs, while civil society, including NGOs, works closely with communities in strengthening ICT-related initiatives. Increased cooperation and partnerships are needed between governmental and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, for effective design and implementation of various initiatives, by giving priority to locally-available human resources.

10 All stakeholders are urged to mobilize resources for the development of the Information Society, including through increasing investment in telecommunication infrastructure, human capacity building, policy frameworks and the development of culturally sensitive local content and applications. International and regional organizations, including financial and development institutions, have an important role to play in integrating the use of ICTs in the development process and making available the necessary resources for this purpose.

11 Priority shall be placed on strengthening local microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises through their integration into the digital economy. Public policies must foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The development of technology-based firms shall be encouraged through such mechanisms as venture capital funds, technology parks and business incubators, together with

the participation of academic institutions and research networks. In addition, special mechanisms shall be put in place to encourage the banking sector to develop secure and reliable applications to facilitate online transactions.

#### **4) Capacity building: human resources development, education, and training**

12 In order for people to make the most of the Information Society, they must have enhanced levels of ICT literacy and ICT skills. To achieve this, relevant education and training should be promoted at every level, from primary to adult, to open up opportunities for as many people as possible, and especially for the disadvantaged. The capacity of developing and least developed countries to apply ICTs effectively must be enhanced through regional and international cooperation.

13 ICTs can contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and the sharing of knowledge and information. Teachers act as a gateway to the Information Society, and their skills development and curriculum resources need increased support. It is also important to improve both basic and advanced education in science and technology. This will help to create a critical mass of highly qualified and skilled ICT professionals and experts that will continue to serve as a foundation for the region's ICT development. It is recognized that education in network infrastructure development and operation is of particular importance, and is critical to the availability of efficient, reliable, competitive and secure ICT network services;

14 E-learning is about development of skills to access knowledge, which addresses numerous issues such as local content, cultural identity and linguistic diversity and intellectual property rights. Access to knowledge is an essential tool in economic, cultural and social development. The potential exists for all those still outside the reach of the formal educational system to be offered education and information tailored to their need and culture. Education empowers people to overcome poverty, therefore e-learning is one of the most important issues in the bridging of the digital divide;

15 In building an Information Society, we should take into account Youth, which forms the majority of the population in many developing regions and is a force for socio-economic development. Equipping young people with knowledge and skills on ICTs to prepare them for full participation in the Information Society is an important goal.

16 It is essential to disseminate information regarding the potential of new technologies through the exchange of information on best practices, campaigns, pilot projects, demonstrations and public discussions. "E-literacy" courses should be aimed at training the population in the use of information and communication technologies, and these courses should provide ICT users with the skills they need to utilize and produce useful and socially meaningful content for the benefit of all socio-economic levels. The formation and maintenance of a workforce to act as a pillar of the information society shall be undertaken in close cooperation with the private sector and civil society in general.

#### **5) Security**

17 Establishing appropriate national legislative frameworks that safeguard the public and general interest and intellectual property and that foster electronic communications and transactions is essential. Protection from civil and criminal offences ("cybercrime"), settlement and clearance issues, network security and assurance of the confidentiality of personal information are essential in

order to build trust in information networks. Multilateral, transparent and democratic Internet governance should form part of this effort, taking into account the needs of the public and private sectors, as well as those of civil society.

18 Among the challenges to be faced are the general lack of awareness of information security issues, the rapidly evolving complexity, capacity and reach of information technology, the anonymity offered by these technologies, and the trans-national nature of communication frameworks. Recognizing the principle of fair, equitable and appropriate access to ICTs for all countries, special attention should be paid to the fact that ICTs can potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security, and may adversely affect the integrity of the infrastructure within States, to the detriment of their security in both civil and military fields. A multi-pronged approach is needed to address these challenges, and cybercrime, on all fronts, with emphasis on preventive approaches, national guidelines and regional and international cooperation. At the same time, action to address cybercrime and to ensure a safe and secure Information Society must respect the sovereignty of nations and maintain respect for the constitutional and other rights of all persons, including freedom of expression.

19 All stakeholders concerned with ICT issues should take the necessary steps to enhance security, user confidence and other aspects of information and system/network integrity in order to avoid the risk of wholesale disruption and destruction of the network systems on which they are increasingly dependent. Effective information security could be guaranteed not only by technology, but also by education and training, policy and law, and international cooperation. In the long term, development of a “global culture of cybersecurity”, based on a common understanding of regulations and appropriate mechanisms for information and technology exchange and international cooperation, should be promoted;

## **6) *Enabling environment***

20 The transition to the Information Society requires the creation of appropriate and transparent legal, regulatory and policy frameworks at the global, regional and national levels. These frameworks should give due regard to the rights and obligations of all stakeholders in such areas as freedom of expression, privacy, security, management of Internet addresses and domain names, and consumer protection, while also maintaining economic incentives and ensuring trust and confidence for business activities. In order to secure prompt settlement of disputes, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) should be considered along with normal judicial proceedings.

21 Competition shall be promoted as the best way to drive down prices and to ensure the ongoing modernization of networks and services.

22 Working towards open and flexible international and interoperable standards is an important issue for all countries so as to ensure that all can utilize the technology and associated content and services to their maximum potential. Development and deployment of open-source software should be encouraged, as appropriate, as should open standards for ICT networking.

23 It is important to ensure a balance between intellectual property rights (IPR) and the public interest. While intellectual property rights play a vital role in fostering innovation in software, e-commerce and associated trade and investment, there is a need to promote initiatives to ensure fair balance between IPRs and the interests of the users of information, while also taking into consideration the global consensus achieved on IPR issues in multilateral organizations;

24 Managing the radio-electric spectrum in the public and general interest and in accordance with the basic principle of legality, with full observance of national laws and regulations and international agreements governing the management of frequencies.

25 Specific proposals from the Africa region include:

- adopting policies to stimulate the building of ICT infrastructure and providing universal access particularly in rural and remote areas through innovative and Africa-friendly solutions;
- removing duties levied on ICT hardware and software until the second phase of WSIS takes place in Tunis in 2005;
- adopting the “African charter” on radio broadcasting as a framework for the development of policies and legislations regarding information technologies and broadcasting in Africa.

### ***7) Promotion of development-oriented ICT applications for all***

26 Information and Communication Technologies can support social and economic development, including the emergence of e-communities. But it is also important to ensure that traditional models are recognized and respected, so that the non-users of ICTs are not marginalized. The following examples are intended to illustrate the potential for this.

27 E-Government: ICT tools will make policies more accountable and transparent and will enable better monitoring, evaluation and control of public services and allow for greater efficiency in their delivery. Public administration can make use of ICT tools to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency in the delivery of public services to citizens (education, health, transportation etc.) and to enterprises;

28 E-Business: Enterprises both large and small can use ICTs to foster innovation, realize gains in productivity, reduce transaction costs and benefit from network externalities. In support of this process, Governments need to stimulate, through the adoption of an enabling environment services, regulatory framework for the promotion of private investment applications and content, based on a widely available broadband infrastructure, and foster public - private partnerships. On the consumer side, ICTs can bring to consumers greater satisfaction through their interaction with many potential suppliers, beyond the constraints of location.

29 E-learning: Access to education and knowledge is essential for economic, social and cultural development, and as a means of personal empowerment, community development and business efficiency. ICT networks have the potential to offer unprecedented educational opportunities to all groups in all areas. Implementation of affordable and universal educational programmes, content, broadband networks and hardware should be promoted. The introduction and development of ICTs in various schools and other learning institutions shall be supported through the establishment and maintenance of a human resources network that institutionalizes the ongoing training of teachers and instructors, who are the backbone of innovation. Advantage shall be taken of best practices to create high-quality, readily accessible teaching material from all over the world to facilitate knowledge transfer to the national level. Special attention shall be devoted to multilingual training and to the use and development of translation software.

30 E-health: Access to healthcare information and services is a basic right. Many countries lack adequate healthcare facilities and personnel, particularly in rural and remote areas. The use of ICTs promotes social inclusion of all members of society by enabling equitable access to healthcare services, as well as empowering citizens to better manage their own health and to participate more

effectively in the healthcare process. ICTs should be incorporated on a mass scale in the field of health care with a view to improving resource use, patient satisfaction, personalized care, and the coordination of public health-care systems, private institutions and the academic sector. Innovative solutions and options must be devised for providing health services to under-served areas. Another e-health priority shall be the prevention, treatment and control of the spread of diseases, specifically HIV/AIDS.

### **8) Cultural identity and linguistic diversity, local content and media development**

31 Linguistic and cultural diversity enriches the development of society by giving expression to a range of different values and ideas. It can facilitate the spread and use of information by presenting it in the language and cultural context most familiar to the user, thereby further encouraging the use of ICTs.

32 Public policy should also foster the creation of varied information content, which helps to preserve and disseminate local and national culture, language and heritage. Local authorities have an important role to play, because for citizens they represent the first level of contact with the administrations and they could also foster the development of local communities. Promotion of cultural diversity and identity, including the creation of varied information content and the digitalisation of the educational, scientific and cultural heritage is an important priority in the development of the Information Society. Research on the social and cultural impact of ICTs should be continued.

33 Promoting broadband networks could not only support research, business and personal activities, but also help to preserve cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge and traditions. In this context, an effort should be made to support multilingual domain names, local content development, digital archives, diverse forms of digital media, content translation and adaptation. The development of standard and recognized character sets and language codes should also be supported.

34 Specific proposals from African States include to:

- support the African Language Academy;
- recreate the “African news exchange”;
- establish a special fund for digitizing African archives and libraries
- establish a multilateral African television network;
- invest in African media content as well as new technologies;
- develop independent production.

### **9) Identifying and overcoming barriers to the achievement of the information society with a human perspective**

#### **10) Other issues**

#### **B. Objectives**

35 Examples of possible concrete and comprehensive actions could include:

- a) The following could serve as **benchmarks** for actions to be taken:
- all villages to be connected by 2010, with a community access points by 2015;
  - all universities be connected by 2005 and all secondary schools by 2010 and all primary schools by 2015;
  - all hospitals to be connected by 2005 and health centres by 2010;
  - 90% of the world's population to be within wireless coverage by 2010 and 100% by 2015;
  - all central governments departments to have a website and email address by 2005 and all local governments departments by 2010.
- b) Developing national **e-strategies** for all countries within three years, including the necessary human capacity building.
- c) Launching of a “**Global Digital Compact**” as a new pattern for partnership and interaction between governments and non-governmental actors, based on division of labour and specialized responsibilities, as well as on identified specific and common interests, will work together to achieve IT development goals (e.g. governments create stimulating regulatory environment and fiscal incentives, business bring in technology and made available simple applications, non-governmental organizations undertake awareness campaigns and work at community level etc.) (*a model that could start from the institutional relationships already existing in ITU, with ITU as coordinator*).
- d) Launching and gradually developing an aggregate **ICT Development (Digital Opportunity) Index** and publish it annually or every two years in a **ICT Development Report**, where ranking of countries will be accompanied by analytical work on policies and their implementation. (*ITU is to catalyse and combine in a coherent structure the existing experiences in various organizations, universities, think-tanks etc.*)
- e) Elaborating and launching during the Geneva phase of the Summit a “**Handbook on good practices and success stories**”, as a compilation of contributions from all stakeholders, in a concise and convincing format, which is to be re-issued periodically and turned into a permanent experience-sharing exercise.
- f) **Equipping and training content workers in the LDCs**, such as archivists, librarians, scientists, teachers and journalists in making use of the expertise and operational capacity of the relevant international professional organizations.
- g) Revising the **curricula** of the primary and secondary schools in all countries, within three years, in order to meet the challenges of the information society.
- h) Create the necessary technical (software and hardware) conditions, which would permit all **languages** in the world to be present and used on the Internet.

### C. Strategies programmes, methods for implementation

36 It is important for Governments to promote comprehensive and forward-looking national strategies for the development of the Information Society, involving private sector and civil society. Private sector involvement is crucial for a sound and sustainable development of infrastructures, content and application. National e-strategies need to be adapted to the specific requirements of varied communities and reflect the stage of development and the structural characteristics of the national economy. Such strategies can benefit from existing knowledge and experience and

exchanges notably on best practices would play a key role, allowing countries to learn from one another through peer dialogue.

37 To be effective, beyond the identification of goals, the strategies should include timeframes, indicators and mechanisms for monitoring performance based not only on quantitative but also qualitative criteria. In the case of smaller countries, regional strategies can contribute to the emergence of larger markets, offering more attractive conditions for private sector investment as well as for a competitive environment. Furthermore ICTs could be of particular relevance in the development context, because they offer opportunities to Public Administrations, help attract private investments and allow for leapfrogging using new and advanced technologies.

38 The development of a strategy entails understanding what to promote, where to promote it, and how to tailor and implement activities to achieve maximum impact. This should capitalize on existing national, regional and global efforts. Specific initiatives could include:

- promoting long-term government spending on R and D and higher education, with the aim of mastering and adapting specific ICT solutions;
- providing incentives and regulatory schemes that would enhance private sector capabilities in terms of human resource development, infrastructure and institution building.
- providing tax incentives for start up ICT companies.

39 The development and establishment of performance evaluation and dissemination systems should be promoted, together with mechanisms that include community measures and indicators that reflect the efforts and progress made by the countries of the region in establishing facilities for ICT access and use within a community context.

#### **D. Cooperation and funding**

40 Close international cooperation among national authorities, stakeholders and international organizations in all aspects of the information society is more vital today than ever and, to this end, advantage shall be taken of the opportunities offered by regional financial institutions. The international community is called upon to provide technical and financial cooperation at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. There is a need to reaffirm the need for the developed countries to make available the official development assistance (ODA) commitments that they announced at the International Conference on Financing for Development. It is necessary for all countries to comply with all aspects of the consensus reached at that conference. The countries represented at the Conference call upon those developed countries that have not already done so to take concrete action to fulfill the target level of 0.7% of their GDP as official development assistance.

#### **E. Follow up**

### **FROM GENEVA TO TUNIS**

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