

Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR-39-E

30 May 2003

Original: English

World Federalist Movement Response to WSIS Draft Declaration and Draft Action Plan

MAY 2003

The World Federalist Movement, an international non-governmental organization in consultative status with ECOSOC, attaches great importance to convening of the World Summit on the Information Society. WFM has long been a leading advocate of global democracy, international human rights, and sustainable development, guiding principles that are integral to a just and equitable Information Society.

The following are WFM's comments on the Draft Declaration and Draft Plan of Action dated March 21, 2003 (WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E and WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E).

(NOTE : In this document the original draft text is in *italics*. WFM suggested text is boxed.)

General Comments

WFM's principal concerns are related to its longstanding commitment to international democracy, global governance and UN reform. WFM views information communication technologies as having incredible potential to increase the public information, participation, transparency, and accountability of governments and public administrations, from the local to the global levels. But this potential can only be attained through strong commitments by governments to their realization.

WFM notes recent encouraging developments at the United Nations related to the Information Society, such as webcasting of the UN General Assembly main sessions, the "paper-less committee" being experimented with at this year's Committee on Non-governmental Organizations and the online "chats" and discussion boards on the World Trade Organization website. At the same time, WFM expresses concern that the UN General Assembly Fifth Committee has deleted the budget line item for UN information services, including the funding for the enhanced, more user-friendly, multi-lingual "Official Document System" to go on-line.

WFM underlines the important role of ICTs to bridge the "democratic divide." For example, ICT's can facilitate the participation of civil society groups, particularly from the developing world, in UN

conferences and follow-up meetings, resulting in increased grassroots awareness, support and implementation.

WFM welcomes the important research being conducted by the One World Trust (www.oneworldtrust.org) to develop a "Global Accountability Index" using as one of its main indicators the level of public information available online. Measurement indices such as the Global Accountability Index are important tools for international organizations to use in assessing their own levels of accountability to their members and stakeholders.

WFM Comments on WSIS Draft Declaration

Para 10: The essential requirements for the development of an equitable Information Society include: ... The commitment to democracy and good governance as well as the existence, in accordance with the legal system of each country, of independent, pluralistic and free mass and other communication media in their various forms, as an important means of fostering public information, societal development and social cohesion.

WFM welcomes this paragraph, noting its ongoing support for international democracy and global governance. WFM would also like to emphasize the importance of public **participation** as well as “public information.”

Section C: Key Principles

WFM suggests the following additional principle:

17. ICTs can be a means to create more participatory, broad-based and inclusive policy-making processes in government, which must be fully developed to ensure the most efficient, universally-accepted, and sustainable policies.

Para 36: Role of stakeholders: Governments must promote awareness in their societies of cyber security risks and seek to strengthen co-operation with the private sector and civil society to prevent the use of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes, so as to build confidence and trust in the use of ICTs and the Information Society.

WFM emphasizes that there must be a balance in the legitimate security concerns in this paragraph and other important principles of the information society, including transparency (para 39), the right to information (para 21), and the right to privacy (para 10). In particular, mechanisms for independent and impartial oversight of government surveillance and monitoring activities of individuals must be guaranteed.

Para 39: Good governance: The Information Society must support participative democracy, transparency, and accountability, at all times upholding the principle of legality. Information is the basis of a well-functioning and transparent decision-making process for both global society and local communities. ICTs can be an important and very effective tool not only for good governance but also for more accessible government.

WFM is encouraged by the inclusion of this paragraph, particularly the emphasis on transparency and accountability, which are key principles that must be integrated into the Information Society.

WFM Comments on the WSIS Draft Plan of Action

Para 17: Cooperation among Stakeholders: Increased cooperation and partnerships are needed between governmental and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and the media, for effective design and implementation of various initiatives, giving priority to locally-available human resources

On this paragraph, WFM would like to emphasize that cooperation should occur during all phases of the process. WFM suggests the following additional phrase:

Including all relevant stakeholders in the design-phase, implementation and follow-up activities is essential to the efficiency, universal acceptance, and sustainability of ICTs.

Para 17.6: International organization should be mandated to mainstream ICTs in their work programmes and asked to prepare action plans to support the fulfillment of the goals indicated in the declaration of principles and in this action plan.

WFM welcomes this paragraph, noting that international organizations have a responsibility to demonstrate and exemplify the goals and principles of the Information Society in their own operations.

Para 36 E-Government: Public administrations should use ICT tools to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency—at all levels of government, and in particular at the local level:

- In the delivery of public services to citizens and to enterprises.*
- In the design of online services, adapted to the needs of citizens and businesses.*
- In the better management of financial, human and public resources and goods.*

WFM supports this text, noting that ICTs as interactive, multi-nodal technologies are uniquely able to improve the transparency and accountability of public administrations. WFM would suggest the addition of the word “participation” to this sentence, as in “transparency, accountability, participation and efficiency.”

In addition, WFM suggests the addition of the following phrase at the end of this paragraph:

- In the policy-making processes of government, enhancing the inclusion of citizen’s voices and concerns

Para 45. b) E-Strategies: Developing national e-strategies for all countries within three years, including the necessary human capacity building

WFM would suggest that international organizations should also be developing international e-strategies.

Para 51. Multilateral organizations have a key role in providing guidance, facilitating peer dialogue, exchange of experience and best practices, offering technical assistance in the design of e-Strategies and, in some cases, complementing the role of governments and other actors

WFM views multilateral organizations as having another important role beyond guidance and technical assistance. WFM suggests the following addition to this paragraph:

<p>- International inter-governmental organizations can model best practices for their member governments by making widely and freely available on their websites public documents and information, broadcasting their public meetings via ICTs, and creating means of public feedback and participation in decision-making such as through online discussion boards and chats.</p>

For more information about WFM and the World Summit on the Information Society, please contact Rik Panganiban, WFM Special Adviser, at rikp@bluewin.ch or tel +41-76 473 3274.