

TakingITGlobal, comments for the Intersessional period on behalf of the WSIS Youth Caucus

The Youth Caucus appreciates the opportunity to provide further brief input on the Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan for the Summit. For a more detailed document describing our overall vision for the Information Society, please refer to our input to Prepcom 2, available online at <http://www.ycdo.net/wsisis/youthinputprepcom2.html>

The Declaration of Principles

- 1. Emphasis should be on goals rather than means.** The declaration is currently too long, and includes technical details and specific projects or steps which would find a much more appropriate place in the **Action Plan** – for example, “capacity building”, and technical specifications on how we might increase access to technology, such as creation of community access points or wireless. Instead, the Declaration’s emphasis should be on *simple*, easy to understand, *universally accepted principles* for an information society – for example, that the information society should be “accessible”, “participatory”, “diverse”, “safe”, “people-centered”, etc, rather than the details of how we realize these goals. We suggest the Declaration should be **rearranged around such core principles**.
- 2. Paragraph on youth critical: could be better placed.** On the ground in our countries around the world, young people not only make up a *majority portion of the population* – but are the *most avid users of technology*, and the *innovators* behind many of the key technologies powering the information society. The present youth paragraph (C16) recognizes the central contribution and remaining potential of youth to realize the opportunity of the information society. At the same time, it rightly notes that *many youth remain disadvantaged and disconnected* and that their needs demand urgent attention. Great!

To improve the flow of the document, governments might consider a new grouping that draws together paragraphs on the various key stakeholders

(business, governments, indigenous peoples, labour, NGOs, women, youth etc) under a principle entitled “A Participatory Information Society”. This area would be a place where the contribution, role and needs of each could be briefly explored and affirmed.

3. Some critical issues require more attention. Some issues have not been explored enough in the Declaration of Principles.

- **Values.** References to the Millennium Declaration and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are positive. Further, we suggest a list of values should be included at the top of the document indicating the type of information society we are striving for. Such values should include: participation, transparency, democracy, equality, and promotion of human rights.
- **Global nature:** More emphasis should be placed on what we consider is one of the most striking characteristics of the Information society – communications technology is creating a ‘global village’, enhancing people’s international outlook, and ingraining a sense of solidarity with people of other cultures, reducing conflict and fostering collaboration.
- **Minimizing the negative impact:** The Declaration of Principles should recognize that *not all aspects of the information society are positive* – that indeed, issues such as increased environmental waste (such as dangerous electronic components including heavy metals), new health concerns (such as electronic radiation, RSI and obesity), and the downside of restructuring in the labour market (technology industry labour practices, technology-related redundancy & the need for retraining etc) are also on the global radar screen as key 21st century challenges.

The Action Plan

The Youth Caucus is not alone in considering the present Action Plan as being far from resembling the elegant and concrete document that world leaders will endorse in December. Therefore, our input at this point is limited to overall structural suggestions and some specifics on realizing the potential of youth as a key information society actor. We will provide more detailed inputs on the overall Action Plan in the lead-up to Prepcom 3.

1. Structure

The Action Plan should be broken down into key areas of activity. Several useful frameworks have already been proposed by governments and civil society (the European Union’s clustering around “e-“, Canada’s 5 themes, others), and we are not

particularly concerned which approach is ultimately taken up for the headings as long as it is uniform and comprehensive.

Each area of activity should include:

- A brief broad statement about the present situation and the future opportunity
- A listing of specific types of steps and approaches that need to be instituted to further global action around the issue, which provide political endorsement and guidance for global institutions, national governments, business, and civil society.
- A formal reference to specific Partnership Initiatives (similar to WSSD Type II Outcomes¹, or the “Key Initiatives” emanating from Dotforce²) that are being established as a result of the World Summit on the Information Society, especially those that are international in scope and involve participation from diverse stakeholders. Such references would point to details elaborated in Appendices (which might take the shape of MOUs between the various partners). Such Partnership Initiatives are critical to concretely take forward action in the second phase of the Summit leading to Tunis.

2. Youth

Areas of action might include:

- Encouraging the meaningful use of computers in the classroom, through increased access, teacher training, curriculum integration.
- Supporting youth-led initiatives to help bridge the digital divide, such as youth-centers with technology access, telecenters, wireless ISPs etc.
- Fostering youth entrepreneurship, especially in the ICT industry through entrepreneurship education, incubators, funds etc.
- Increasing cross-cultural communication through global online youth networks.
- Ensuring fair labour standards for young people working in the ICT industry, including hardware, software, and areas such as call centers.
- Engaging young people in local, national and international ICT policy making.
- Supporting youth-created or related media initiatives to develop and distribute their content, and enhance their skills.
- Support for young researchers pushing the boundaries and exploring the impact of the information society.

Partnership Initiative: Youth Creating Digital Opportunities

Over the course of the WSIS process, the Youth Caucus has been particularly focused on the development of a long-term partnership initiative to realize the

¹ See <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm>

² See <http://www.dotforce.org/reports/matrix.html>

potential of youth to create digital opportunities. Mobilized partners include the Global Knowledge Partnership, TakingITGlobal, and the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the Digital Youth Consortium, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, and more. YCDO provides a comprehensive framework to engage and support youth ICT leaders in policy, action and peer-learning. The partners are also exploring development of a multilateral Youth Creating Digital Opportunity Fund, further details of which will be available in coming months.