our reference

WSIS Executive Secretariat
C/- International Telecommunication Union
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Dear Sir

Australia welcomes the consultation by the ITU, UNESCO and UNDP on the implementation at the international level of action lines resulting from the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Please find attached some preliminary Australian Government views on this issue for consideration at the consultation meeting on 24 February 2006 and more generally.

Attachment 1 sets out a number of points that should be considered in establishing the WSIS implementation process at the international level.

Attachment 2 is our preliminary response to your stakeholder questionnaire.

Australia emphasises the need for any international implementation arrangements to:
• stay focussed on the contribution ICTs can make to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
• be open to multiple stakeholders on a self-selecting basis;
• give due regard and encouragement to action at the national and regional levels;
• be the minimum necessary, lightweight, efficient and effective; and
• provide scope and opportunity for bottom-up autonomy, initiative and innovation.

In the event you need to follow-up on our contribution, our contact officer is Dr Sabina Fernando, Assistant Manager, Internet Governance and WSIS (ph: +61 2 6271 1097; email: ig&wsis@dcita.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

[Signed]

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A/g General Manager
International Branch

24 February 2006

WSIS IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL - POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Australia considers the following points need to be considered carefully in establishing the WSIS implementation process at the international level.

1. Development orientation and MDGs must be kept in sight

In all WSIS implementation activities, care must be taken not to lose sight of the fundamental development orientation of the WSIS action lines and the intention that they help harness ICTs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

2. Geneva and Tunis action lines should be integrated

In considering WSIS implementation, it is important to remember that there are action items in both the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda which will need to be progressed. Organisationally, those action items in the Tunis Agenda that are new may be best brought within the action lines established by the Geneva Summit.

3. WSIS implementation predominantly a national issue

It is clear that very many of the WSIS action lines will need to be implemented at the national level by stakeholders, whether they be government, the private sector, civil society or the technical and academic community, individually or in some combination. This is clearly recognised in paragraph 100 of the Tunis Agenda. There will also be a more limited role for regional implementation as recognised in paragraph 101. Implementation at the international level (paragraph 102, 108. 109) is not necessarily relevant therefore to all action items.

4. Paragraphs 108 and 109 explicitly tied to implementation 'at the international level'

Building on our previous point, the role of action line moderators/facilitators as provided for in paragraphs 108 and 109 of the Tunis Agenda is explicitly tied to multi-stakeholder implementation 'at the international level'. As such we understand the role of action line moderators/facilitators to be confined to action lines which are truly international in scope, not action lines which will be best implemented at the national or regional level. Priority should therefore be given to identifying action lines at the 'international level' which may fall within the scope of paragraphs 108 and 109. Care needs to be taken not to stray unnecessarily into action items at the national and regional levels. The provision of help to national governments in their WSIS implementation efforts in paragraph 103 is a separate issue within the context of UNGA Resolution 57/270B.

5. Multistakeholder involvement may take many forms

The term 'multistakeholder implementation' recognises, in our view, the reality that many different stakeholders will be involved in WSIS implementation, acting individually or in partnerships. It should not be read to infer implementation can only

and must always be undertaken by some form of formal, integrated multistakeholder team operating under UN agency direction.

6. UN agency involvement subject to subparagraph 102(b) of Tunis Agenda

Consistent with subparagraph 102(b) of the Tunis Agenda, each UN agency involved in WSIS implementation must act in accordance with its mandate and competencies, and pursuant to decisions of their respective governing bodies, and within approved resources. Leaders clearly concluded that agency engagement in WSIS implementation should therefore subject to the constitutional and operational parameters set for each agency and agencies should not take the WSIS decisions as an *a priori* approval to exceed these.

7. Meaning of moderation/facilitation must be appropriate and well understood

It is essential that the meaning of 'moderation/facilitation' in the context of WSIS action line implementation be appropriate and well understood by both moderator/facilitators and those stakeholders undertaking actual implementation actions. We are particularly concerned to ensure that moderation/facilitation is not seen as top-down oversight or direction of stakeholders. Moderation/facilitation should emphasise voluntary participation in implementation activities and the sharing of information, particularly with a view to identifying needs and appropriate solutions and preventing duplication. Raising awareness of the WSIS action lines and their potential benefits for stakeholders, particularly in the developing world, should be an important part of facilitation, particularly in terms of developing a culture of bottom-up, organic multistakeholder development of the information society.

8. Stakeholder autonomy must be respected

Building on the previous point, Australia considers it is essential to the continued development of the information society that it not only continue to be multistakeholder, but that all stakeholders – and particularly the private sector and civil society - continue to have space and opportunity to participate as they see fit, being able both to participate in top-down activities and to take initiatives and to innovate in a bottom-up manner, whether acting autonomously or in such combinations as they consider appropriate. Amongst other things, this is important in ensuring the development of the information society remains open to ideas from below, and does not become restricted solely to the outcomes of WSIS.

Correspondingly, care needs to be taken to ensure that moderation/facilitation processes do not lend themselves to a dependence on top-down processes, at the expense of bottom-up initiative and the organic growth of the information society.

9. Terminology needs to be clear and precise

To facilitate discussion of WSIS implementation, terminology should be clear, well understood and used consistently. In particular, a clear distinction needs to be made between 'implementation' (the actual undertaking of actions) and 'moderation/facilitation' (higher level activities to assist with implementation). Implementers can also be moderators/facilitators, but the roles are different. Both

implementation and moderation/facilitation can be undertaken by individual stakeholders or 'teams' of stakeholders. 'Multistakeholder implementation' and 'multistakeholder moderation/facilitation' can refer to implementation and moderation/facilitation being undertaken by multiple stakeholders operating individually, in loose combinations or in integrated teams. Where integrated multistakeholder teams are being referred to, this may need to be clear though terminology like 'implementation by a multistakeholder team' and 'moderation/facilitation by a multistakeholder team'.

10. Moderation/facilitation at international level only 'when appropriate'

While paragraph 108 provides for the creation of action line moderators/facilitators, it is 'when appropriate', not as a matter of course. WSIS implementation should focus on on-the-ground activities of practical benefit. Administrative superstructures should be kept to a minimum and be lightweight, non-duplicative, effective and efficient. The costs and benefits of creating a moderator/facilitator in relation to a particular action line needs to be considered. Moderation/facilitation should focus on 'adding value'; it should not be undertaken for its own sake.

11. 'Moderators/facilitators' must be most appropriate stakeholders for the role

While paragraph 108 provides for the creation of action line moderators/facilitators, it and the Annex do not mandate that they be UN agencies or that the UN agencies listed in the Annex be the actual facilitators/moderators. In addition to facilitators/moderators being created 'when appropriate', the Annex makes it clear that the UN agencies listed are 'possible facilitator/moderators'. That is, it is an 'indicative and non-exhaustive list' (para.108), subject to further consideration, both from the broad perspective of WSIS implementation and from the perspective of the agency and its governing body, consistent with subparagraph 102(b). As UN agencies are only 'possible moderators/facilitators' and the list is 'indicative and non-exhaustive', the role of moderator/facilitator should also be open to non-UN stakeholders, either solely or in partnership, if they are willing and best able to fulfil the role. In this context, the organisation of action line meetings by particular UN agencies in advance of decisions on actual moderators/facilitators appears premature.

12. Scope for moderators/facilitators to change over time

As the implementation of action lines is likely to be a long term undertaking and organisational responsibilities and competencies may change, there should be flexibility as to who is a moderator/facilitators and openness to change if this is warranted.

13. Moderators/facilitators selection should be based on substantive responsibility

If there is consensus that there is a need for a facilitator/moderator and that a UN agency is appropriate, we consider the responsible UN agency should generally be the agency with the substantive policy responsibility that best aligns with the issue concerned. For example, in the case of e-learning, UNESCO; in the case of e-health, the WHO; in the case of e-employment, the ILO, and so forth. Just because ICTs may be the medium for delivery of a service, this is not sufficient reason for the ITU to take a substantive role in an issue. This ensures subject-specific policy expertise can be

applied in assessing the use of ICTs in their delivery. This is the general approach taken in assigning policy responsibility in Australia for such matters and, as far as we are aware, most other countries. The involvement of any UN agency, however, should always be subject to subparagraph 102(b), particularly the decision of their respective governing bodies, having regard to overall priorities.

14. Need for, nature and role of, 'Leading Facilitating Agencies' must be clear

Paragraph 109 of the Tunis Agenda recognises the contributions of the ITU, UNESCO and UNDP to the WSIS process and indicates they should play 'leading facilitating roles in implementation of the Plan of Action' and organise a meeting in this context. 'Leading facilitating roles' should be based on real functional need; functions should not be created to justify the roles. The ITU, UNESCO and UNDP should seek to fulfil these 'leading facilitating roles' without the creation of elaborate administrative superstructures. To the extent 'leading facilitating roles' are considered essential, paragraph 109 does not preclude other stakeholders undertaking such roles and consideration should be given to multistakeholder involvement at this level, if there is interest in it.

It may be difficult and inappropriate for 'leading facilitating agencies' to set timeframes for action as proposed in the draft Terms of Reference in the absence of detailed knowledge of on-the-ground circumstances. Consideration should be given to whether 'leading facilitating roles' can be given adequate effect by the ITU, UNESCO and UNDPO working collaboratively with action line moderators/facilitators and other stakeholders, without the overly hierarchal structure that appears to be envisaged by their special designation. See also point 16 below.

15. Moderation/facilitation not to detract from concrete implementation activities

Where UN agencies take on moderator/facilitator roles, they should take care that they do not focus on these roles at the expense of actual implementation of WSIS action items that may fall within their responsibilities.

16. Moderators/facilitators must coordinate and coordination must add value

Given the potential for overlap in implementing the WSIS action lines, sharing of information to enable coordination of activities, to maximise outcomes from limited resources, and to prevent duplication of effort is important. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that coordination does not become an end in itself. Coordination should be undertaken in a cooperative fashion, with a heavy emphasis on information sharing. Mechanisms may be needed to ensure conflicts about overlapping interests and activities can be resolved effectively and efficiently.

17. Any overall co-ordination/oversight of moderators/facilitators must add value

In his speech on WSIS implementation in Paris on 2 February 2006 (pp.6-7), the Director-General of UNESCO raised the question of overall multistakeholder coordination/oversight of the eleven action lines, including the involvement of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNISG) within the Chief Executives' Board (Tunis Agenda, para.103) and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

(CSTD) (Tunis Agenda, para.105). The comments draw attention to the considerable risk of moderation/facilitation and oversight arrangements for WSIS implementation becoming overly hierarchical, duplicative and bureaucratic. The possible roles of the UNISG and CSTD should be considered in establishing arrangements at lower levels. In particular, it is not clear how the proposed roles for the ITU, UNSECO and UNDP as 'leading facilitating agencies' in implementation sit with the role envisaged for the UNISG 'to facilitate the implementation of WSIS outcomes', particular when the ITU, UNSECO and UNDP are to be considered as lead agencies within the UNISG (Tunis Agenda, para.103). Considerable duplication appears to be involved. While WSIS' decisions on roles need to be recognised, utmost effort should be put into creating an overall implementation structure that is effective but flat, lightweight, and efficient. It may be these issues cannot be adequately resolved until the institutional issues in paragraphs 103-105 are resolved. In all events, consistent with the whole thrust of WSIS, there needs to be appropriate involvement of multiple stakeholders in this overall structure.

18. Reporting must be balanced and not burdensome

The draft terms of reference for leading facilitating agencies and moderators/facilitators place considerable emphasis on reporting. While it is good practice to monitor and confirm the achievement of required actions, appropriate emphasis need to be placed on promoting the WSIS action items and encouraging and otherwise facilitating their implementation. Without action, there will be no progress to report. Care needs to be taken to ensure that reporting does not become burdensome, overly bureaucratic and an end in itself. Annual reporting may well be excessive. As implementers on-the-ground are best placed to report on progress and will want to publicise their successes, emphasis might be placed on self-reporting. The Tunis Agenda already provides for further ICT statistical work and ongoing stocktaking. Efforts should be made to draw on activities in these areas, to the extent relevant to international level implementation. Existing reporting mechanisms, particularly those of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, should be used wherever possible to avoid potentially duplicative administration and reporting.

ATTACHMENT 2

Questionnaire survey of opinions on WSIS follow-up and implementation

In advance of the consultation meeting of WSIS action line moderators/facilitators, to be held on **February 24th in Geneva**, this questionnaire aims to provide an open framework for the discussion and to secure inputs from the wider WSIS community. You may wish to answer any or all of the questions below, and submit them by email to wsis-info@itu.int (please send as an attachment). Alternatively you may prefer to use these questions to structure your inputs to the discussion at the meeting.

Your details	
Name:	Colin Oliver, General Manager, International
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My comments: ✓ Are made in a professional capacity; ☐ In a private capacity

 ✓ Can be posted on the public website; ☐ Are intended for background information

Questionnaire

1   The Tunis Agenda (Implementation & follow-up , para 108-109) foresees that multi-stakeholder implementation will follow the WSIS themes and action lines:

  (a) *What might be a good model for conceptualising the work on each action line (i.e. multi-stakeholder teams)?*

Fundamental to the conceptual model should be multistakeholder involvement on a self-selecting basis, minimum top-down direction and maximum stakeholder autonomy. Multi-stakeholder involvement individually and in various combinations has been a key element in the development and growth of the information society. This is an ongoing process. To a large extent the key WSIS outcome was to formalise and provide a framework for activity that is, and has been, variously engaged in by multiple stakeholders working towards the development of a global information society. Whilst there may be some value in moderating/facilitating these various activities, it is important to ensure that the facilitator/moderator role does not impinge on multistakeholder autonomy as this may work against bottom-up initiative, innovation and responsiveness to on-the-ground circumstances.

The Tunis Agenda (para 100-102) sets out the national, regional and international roles in WSIS implementation. This should inform the work of facilitators/moderators. Australia considers paragraphs 108-109 relate to 'multistakeholder implementation at the international level' which is a limited sub-set of WSIS actions. Further, paragraph 108 clearly specifies that such multi-stakeholder implementation should only be moderated/facilitated "when appropriate".

All arrangements should effective, but light touch, efficient and flexible.

Consideration should be given to the potential to use a website or other online resources as a means of information sharing, networking and coordination which stakeholders could use to organise themselves, thus reducing the need for elaborate, formal institutional structures.

(b)   What are key issues that might __best__ be addressed by such teams?

There is some ambiguity as to whether this question relates to facilitator/moderator teams or to multistakeholder teams engaged in the task of WSIS implementation. If the latter, please see (a) above and we re-emphasise the need for autonomy and flexibility so that these teams (whether formal or informal) may continue to contribute to the organic growth of the information society according to their areas of expertise. On the basis that it refers to facilitator/moderator teams, the key issue is to ensure the matching of the most appropriate agency to the relevant action line. This must be based on the agency's substantive policy responsibility, core competency and expertise so that its contribution adds value to the organic growth of the information society.

(c)   How can synergies within and among the action-lines be enhanced?

- Effective coordination through communication and information sharing and a concerted effort to minimise duplication.

- Ensuring the lead on particular action line be taken by the most appropriate stakeholder – and where this is a UN agency, the agency with the most appropriate substantive policy responsibility in the area concerned.

(d) How might linkages be made to follow-up on Internet governance?(e.g. with regard to potential common areas of concern such as universal access and reduction in costs)?

There are currently several processes in train, including the proposed Internet Governance Forum to deal with Internet governance issues. These should be seen as the primary vehicles for action in this area. Consequently in order to minimise potential for confusion on these issues and unnecessary duplication, the WSIS facilitator/moderator role should be minimal. Instead, there should be flexibility and autonomy for relevant specialist organisations to contribute to the specific Internet governance processes.

2. In the context of multi-stakeholder implementation, UN agencies have been nominated as   moderators/facilitators for each WSIS action line.

(a)   What do see as key responsibilities of the facilitators? (see draft TOR) Should additional moderators/facilitators be added to the list and if so how should they be identified?

Given the range of multiple stakeholders currently involved in various aspects of WSIS related implementation activities, the facilitator/moderator role must be minimalist, providing flexibility and autonomy to multiple stakeholders. This will allow consideration of local circumstances and foster bottom-up initiative and innovation, while enhancing efficiency and minimising scope for duplication. Promoting awareness of the WSIS action lines and their potential benefit to stakeholders, particularly in developing countries to encourage bottom-up initiatives, may be useful. This would be in addition to identifying and referring needs/issues to the relevant stakeholders, and facilitating information sharing on

possible practical solutions. A lightweight monitoring role facilitating coordination and information sharing between the various stakeholders appears appropriate (Tunis Agenda, para. 110), though full consideration should be given to self reporting.

Given the indicative, non-exhaustive nature of the list of facilitators/moderators identified in the Annex to the Tunis Agenda, it is appropriate that other organisations be able to nominate as possible moderators/facilitators.

(b)   ***Work will likely involve a combination of online sharing and collaboration and meetings. What outcome would you expect from a meeting of the moderators/ facilitators of the action-lines?***

The question is ambiguous in terms of whether it is asking about substantive outcomes or reporting to the public. In terms of substantive outcomes, we would expect cross-checking that action lines are being covered (ie. no gaps), are not being duplicated (ie. no overlaps) and the identification of possible synergies between action lines. Sharing of experience that may be of mutual interest and benefit. Meetings should not, however, simply be held for the sake of meeting. In terms of reporting, if warranted, a short (1-2 page) public report confirming progress or otherwise may be of interest to stakeholders. Reporting should not involve excessive resources. Minutes might be published for those interested.

(c)   ***What might be innovative ways of reporting on progress, and sharing information on key challenges and priorities for implementation? How might results be tracked?***

The Tunis Agenda has provided for various reporting processes on WSIS implementation, including periodic evaluations (para. 112), using the mechanism set out in paragraphs 113-120. Caution must be exercised to prevent duplication and creating an undue burden. Use of self-reporting is preferred. Use of ICTs and online processes is encouraged to share information and maximise participation.

2   The Tunis Agenda has a strong development focus.

(a)   ***How can developing country participation be enhanced?***

We understand the question to refer to enhanced participation in the moderation /facilitation of 'implementation at the international level'. A key to enhancing participation is to ensure that the process generates productive outcomes of value and relevance to developing countries. Appropriate and efficient use of ICTs may be helpful to achieve articulated development outcomes within these countries. In providing for online participation, consideration should be given to accessibility issues, for example, possible bandwidth constraints and the needs of people with disabilities.

(b)   ***In what ways could the multi-stakeholder implementation process contribute to facilitating action at the national level, e.g. capacity-building and innovation in policy and/or implementation?***

We assume this question is referring to 'multistakeholder implementation at the international level' (para.108) and moderation/facilitation in that context. As noted above, we consider paragraph 108 only refers to WSIS action items requiring implementation at the international level (ie. 'international implementation'). We consider this a fairly limited set of WSIS action times. Any international level activities would need to be targeted at the national level to have relevance at that level. The role

of UN agencies and other intergovernmental organisations in helping national governments appears to be covered in paragraph 103, which refers to UNGA Resolution 57/270B. Action at the national level is essentially a matter for national stakeholders. Decisions on utilising the results of international implementation processes at the national (and regional levels) would depend on the relevance and utility of the international level actions at these lower levels.

(c)   ***How might the mainstreaming of ICT into other priority development interventions and programmes be facilitated?***

The precise relevance of this question to the broader question of how action line moderation/facilitation at the international level should be undertaken is not clear to us, but we assume it goes to how action lines calling for ICT mainstreaming can be advanced.

Care must be taken not to confuse action items that require international implementation and those that will be implemented at national levels. We generally envisage ICT mainstreaming being considered at the national level, for examine in the context of developing national e-strategies and development strategies, consistent with national priorities (para.100). As a general observation, ICT mainstreaming is a very broad and complex issue that would seem to warrant expert advice from professionals in the field. As a start, information sharing initiatives that demonstrate how ICTs have been mainstreamed and the benefits of mainstreaming ICTs into other development areas such as e-learning, e-health etc may be useful.

3   Do you have any other comments, suggestions or questions that should be addressed?

It must be clear what precisely WSIS implementation at the international level entails. As noted, we consider it refers specifically to items requiring action at the international level, not regional and national levels. As such it is likely to be a limited area of activity, not warranting elaborate administrative superstructures. Interaction between implementation at various levels needs to be considered carefully in the contexts of paragraph 103 as well as paragraphs 108 and 109.

The functions involved in the moderator/facilitator role must be clearly defined. In defining this role, it should be noted that para 108 clearly specifies that such multi-stakeholder implementation should only be moderated/facilitated "when appropriate". Furthermore, given the range of multistakeholder activity in WSIS related implementation measures, it is important that the proposed moderator/facilitator role is not prescriptive and instead provides flexibility and autonomy to related multistakeholder activity whilst facilitating coordination and information exchanges. It is important that the appropriate facilitator/moderator is matched to the appropriate action line in keeping with their areas of core competency as required by para 102(b) of the Tunis Agenda.

Other points we consider worth raising are set out in our separate, accompanying contribution – 'WSIS Implementation Process at the International Level - Points for Consideration'.

Thank you. Please send your response to wsis-info@itu.int.