

ECOSOC Resolution 2008/3

Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,¹

Recalling also that access to information and sharing and creation of knowledge contributes significantly to strengthening economic, social and cultural development, thus helping all countries to reach the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, considering that this process can be enhanced by removing barriers to universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to information, and underlining the importance of removing barriers to bridging the digital divide, particularly those that hinder the full achievement of the economic, social and cultural development of countries and the welfare of their people, in particular in developing countries,

Recognizing the efforts by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes of the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Recognizing also the efforts of the United Nations organizations and programmes and of all the regional commissions in implementing the goals, commitments and recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Recalling its resolution 2006/46 of 28 July 2006 on the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the mandate that it gave to the Commission,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/29 of 27 July 2007,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels,²

Evolving challenges and opportunities

1. *Notes* that the digital divide is changing in some respects and that while in general the divide may be shrinking, a new form of digital divide is emerging in terms of difference in quality and speed of access to information and communications technologies;

¹ See A/C.2/59/3, annex, and A/60/687; the outcome documents are also available at <http://www.itu.int/WSIS/index.html>.

² A/63/72-E/2008/48.

2. *Also notes* the continuing relevance of assisting developing countries in their efforts to overcome the digital divide, particularly with regard to both access and capacity;

3. *Further notes* that the disparity continues between developed and developing countries in respect of the cost and quality of access and that in developed, high-income economies, the average cost of a broadband connection is significantly less than in developing countries, both in nominal terms and as a percentage of the average monthly income;

4. *Notes* that the gender divide still persists in respect of the quality and variety of means of access to the Internet and information and communications technologies in the building of the information society in both developed and developing countries;

5. *Also notes* the strong growth of mobile telephony subscriptions, especially in developing countries;

6. *Notes with concern* the growing number of incidents affecting global network safety and security and provoking service outages in large regions of the world;

7. *Notes* that in many countries there is inadequate coherence and complementarity between national information and communications technology policies and national development and poverty reduction strategies and that, especially in the poorer rural areas, the potential of the Internet and information and communications technologies in general for promoting development has not yet been fully utilized;

8. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to increase efforts towards funding of and investment in information and communications technologies in order to advance broadband access, including wireless access, in areas and countries in which it is still limited or non-existent;

9. *Calls upon* all States, in building the information society, to take steps with a view to avoiding and to refrain from taking any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries and that hinders their well-being;

10. *Reaffirms* that the protection of intellectual property is important for encouraging innovation and creativity in the information society, that, similarly, the wide dissemination, diffusion and sharing of knowledge is important for encouraging innovation and creativity, and that facilitating meaningful participation by all in intellectual property issues and knowledge-sharing through full awareness and capacity-building is a fundamental function of an inclusive information society;

11. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to increase their efforts to reduce the disparity in cost of access, through, for example, the establishment of Internet exchange points and the creation of a competitive environment, at both the backbone network and local levels;

12. *Recommends* that all States strive for gender equality in access to the Internet and in building the information society in both developed and developing countries, through ensuring the inclusion of the gender approach in information and communications technology policies in national strategies;

13. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to continue the development and spread of easy-to-use applications and services for mobile phones and related devices, especially those that are useful in rural areas and work with low bandwidth and high latency;

14. *Also calls upon* all stakeholders to cooperate more closely in making global networks more stable, resilient and secure and in overcoming outages of, incidents affecting and attacks on these networks;

15. *Calls upon* international and regional organizations to assess and report on a regular basis on the universal accessibility of nations to information and communications technologies, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of the information and communications technology sectors of developing countries;

16. *Recommends* the mainstreaming of information and communications technology policies into national development or poverty reduction strategies, in accordance with the priorities of countries;

17. *Also recommends* increased international cooperation at all levels and among all stakeholders to help rural areas access and benefit from the Internet and information and communications technologies in general;

Successes and shortcomings to date in respect of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

18. *Takes note with appreciation* of the ongoing work of the Internet Governance Forum, its multi-stakeholder approach and its innovative platform and expresses its thanks to host Governments for their contributions;

19. *Acknowledges* the progress made towards developing multilingual capabilities on the Internet;

20. *Also acknowledges* the work of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technologies for Development on developing indicators for further consideration and decision by the Statistical Commission;

21. *Notes* the lack of indicators needed to measure progress towards achieving the targets as set out in section B of the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society at its first phase, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December,³ and endorsed by the General Assembly;⁴

³ See A/C.2/59/3, annex.

⁴ See General Assembly resolution 59/220.

22. *Takes note* of the efforts undertaken by the regional commissions in respect of the coordination of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, including in developing e-strategies, capacity-building and measuring of information and communications technologies;

23. *Acknowledges* the efforts of all action line facilitators, especially the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in their role as lead facilitators;

24. *Notes* that the architecture for the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, as defined in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,⁵ is rather complex and has also imposed limitations in respect of the participation of all stakeholders, in particular those from developing countries;

25. *Takes note* of the letter from the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed to relevant organizations responsible for essential tasks associated with the Internet in which he requested them to report on the steps they had taken towards achieving enhanced cooperation in accordance with paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda and looks forward to the report to be prepared by the Secretary-General, which may contain recommendations on how the process should be pursued, and notes that all stakeholders, in their respective roles, will be included in this process;

26. *Reaffirms* the relevance of decisions on Internet governance in their entirety, as outlined in the Tunis Agenda;

27. *Recommends* that the Internet Governance Forum, as a multi-stakeholder discussion forum, retain its focus on public policy issues related to Internet governance;

28. *Encourages* collaboration among all stakeholders, including international organizations, consistent with their mandate and existing budgetary resources, in regard to the multilingualization of the Internet;

29. *Recommends* that the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development consider the creation of benchmarks and indicators, including impact indicators, for further consideration and decision by the Statistical Commission, in order to track progress towards the attainment of the specific goals and targets set out in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society, particularly section B of the Plan of Action adopted in Geneva;

30. *Also recommends* that action line facilitators, in cooperation with all stakeholders, establish milestones, deadlines and calendars for their action lines, taking into account the outcome documents of the Summit;

⁵ See chap. I, sect. B, of the report of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, as contained in document A/60/687.

31. *Further recommends* that lead facilitators conduct open-ended multi-stakeholder consultations with a view to improving the effectiveness and coherence of the annual clustering of activities related to the World Summit on the Information Society;

32. *Recommends* that the United Nations Group on the Information Society organize focused, open-ended multi-stakeholder consultations on the implementation of paragraphs 3 to 28 of the Tunis Agenda, concerning financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of information and communications technologies for development;

33. *Also recommends* the introduction in the facilitation process of electronic collaboration tools such as mailing lists, Web 2.0 applications, observatories and clearing-house models in order to enhance multi-stakeholder participation, in particular from developing countries;

34. *Further recommends* that in submitting their reports to the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/8 of 25 July 2007, action line facilitators bring to the attention of the Commission obstacles and difficulties encountered by all stakeholders in regard to the commitments and recommendations pertaining to their respective action line at the regional and international levels and make proposals to the Commission for possible action, whenever deemed necessary;

35. *Invites* all actors and institutions involved in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society to clarify further their respective roles, improve coordination and information-sharing and build synergies to make the most effective use of available resources;

36. *Invites* the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to support the review and assessment work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in regard to the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society;

37. *Recommends* that all stakeholders redouble their efforts to implement the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, so as to enhance digital opportunities for all people and help bridge the digital divide.

*34th plenary meeting
18 July 2008*