Center For Global Communications (GLOCOM)

Comments on the working documents for the Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan (documents dated March 21, 2003), World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Submitted by the Center For Global Communications (GLOCOM), International University of Japan.

May 30, 2003.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this contribution on the working documents for the Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan. The Center For Global Communications (GLOCOM) is a non-governmental organization accredited for PrepCom1 and PrepCom2.

I. General Comment

We suggest that the working documents make reference to the work of the G8 DOT Force, and provide support for the ongoing Genoa Plan of Action implementation activities undertaken by the informal DOT Force Network in partnership with the UN ICT Task

Force. The DOT Force report "Digital Opportunities for All: Meeting the Challenge" covers many of the issues raised in both WSIS working documents. The DOT Force "Genoa Plan of Action" offers a good basis from which to build a comprehensive action plan for the information society. The WSIS must build on these and other existing bodies of work.

The final report of the Digital Opportunity Task Force is available from <http://www.dotforce.org/reports/DOT_Force_Report_V_5.0h.pdf>

II. Specific issues

We would like to address 3 issues and then offer some short comments on other parts of the working documents.

1. Information Society and Accessibility
2. The Internet's Unique Identifier Systems
3. Universal Participation in Global Policymaking for ICTs
4. Other comments

Key:

- Text from the March 21 intersessional documents in *italic*.
- Comments and explanation of suggested changes in unformatted text.
- Suggested new text in **bold**.
- All paragraph numbers refer to numbering shown in the March 21 working documents, we do not take account of renumbering resulting from suggested insertions.

1. Information Society and Accessibility

"The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone

regardless of disability is an essential aspect."

  -- Tim Berners-Lee, W3C Director and inventor of the World Wide Web

The declaration and action plan should include specific references to ensuring that information and communication equipment and services are accessible for the disabled and elderly.

Accessibility can be defined as the extent to which the operation and use of information and communication equipment and services are easy to perform and understand, in order to ensure use, without hindrance, by the elderly and people with permanent or temporary disabilities. This is a concept of "universal design", of making all facilities, products and services accessible to anybody, whether the person is or is not older or disabled. Universal design should be embraced as a principle of the Information Society.

General principles to be considered with respect to accessibility include basic policies that when information and communication equipment and services are planned, developed and designed, consideration should be given to make them usable by the elderly and disabled people to the greatest extent possible. And, safety should be secured in connection with the accessibility-related functions provided.

We also note the importance given to Accessibility in the ITU World Telecom 2003 Conference (Friday, October 17).

WSIS Draft declaration of Principles, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E, 21 March 2003:

Section *C. An Information Society for all: key principles*

Insert new paragraph 17 (follows after current "*16. Young people constitute the…*")

"**17. Accessibility: Information Society must be an inclusive society accessible to all. People with disabilities and others who require special consideration in terms of**

accessibility such as the elderly must be able to enjoy the full benefits of the Information Society. Information and communication technologies and services should be developed and designed to be operable by the elderly and disabled. Accessibility must be positively addressed in all e-Government and e-Strategy initiatives."

In current paragraph *25. Barriers*. The "from disabilities" should be added to read:

"*25. Barriers to equitable access result from differences in education and literacy levels,* **from disabilities,** *gender, age, income and connectivity, as well as from a lack of user training and cultural and linguistic constraints and particular conditions of access to the relevant technology. ICTs can also be used in order to overcome these and other barriers in society.*"

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

Insert new paragraph 30 (follows after current "*29. Demand-driven applications*").

"**30. Government procurement of accessible ICT products and services will have multiple benefits: It will stimulate the market for such products and services, provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities within government, and enable people with disabilities and the elderly to access government services.**"

Section *6) Enabling environment*

Insert new paragraph 46 (follows after current "*45. Access to information and communication ...*").

"**46. The World Summit on the Information Society supports and encourages activities underway throughout the world towards the development of harmonized global standards on how to provide ICT equipment and services with consideration given to the needs of people with disabilities and the elderly. Consideration should**

also be given to the development of a global management standard which is more qualitative than quantitative."

WSIS Draft action plan, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, 21 March 2003:

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

Insert new paragraph 16 (first paragraph in Section "*3) The role of governments...*").

"**16. Government strategies and policies: The development and implementation of e-Government and e-Strategy initiatives must take into account and include relevant policies to address accessibility for the disabled and elderly.** "

Section *6) Enabling environment*

Current paragraph *30. Standardization*, should include reference to the need to harmonize existing national and regional standards for accessible ICT products and services. This paragraph should read:

"*30. Standardization: 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 sub-regional levels, through any media.* **The international harmonization of national and regional standards for accessible ICT products and services must supported and actively encouraged.** "

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

In current paragraph 35, consideration for the disabled and elderly should be included. This paragraph should read:

"35. ICTs can support social and economic development. 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. **In all these examples particular attention must be paid to the accessibility needs of the disabled and elderly.** *"*

Section *B. Objectives*

Insert new subsection in paragraph 45 (follows after current *"h) World languages on the Internet"*).

"i) WSIS compliance with W3C accessibility guidelines. In the spirit of "Information Society for all", the websites and Internet systems of the WSIS, its bureaus, partner organizations and WSIS related websites should be compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility guidelines <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>. This should be achieved by the Geneva Summit (December 2003.) The WSIS encourages all UN Agencies and affiliated organizations and projects, international organizations, the private sector and civil society participating and contributing to WSIS to bring their websites and Internet systems into compliance with W3C accessibility guidelines by November 2005 and the Tunis WSIS Summit."

2. The Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

(1) WSIS Draft declaration of Principles, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E, paragraph 44:

"44. Management of Internet names and addresses: Internet governance must be multilateral, democratic and transparent, taking into account the needs of the public and private sectors as well as those of the civil society, and respecting multilingualism. The coordination responsibility for root servers, domain names, and Internet Protocol (IP) address assignment should rest with a suitable international, inter-governmental organization. The policy authority for country code top-level-domain names (ccTLDs)

should be the sovereign right of countries."

Comment:

"Internet Governance" is not appropriate terminology, it may provide a misleading view of what the Internet is, how it is constituted and how it functions. The Internet is a global network of networks. It can be coordinated so it functions as a coherent "whole", but there is no system of governance that we would recognize in the usual sense.

The Internet domain name system (DNS) root servers function within a well established framework that is designed to meet the technical requirements and limitations of the Internet and to ensure that the global network functions in a secure, stable and predictable manner.

Robust, well established and well recognized mechanisms for the allocation, management and coordination of Internet (IP) addresses exist. These mechanisms are dynamic in nature, and are actively managed and developed through an industry self-regulatory process which is open to all affected stakeholders in the Internet community, and thus highly responsive to changes in industry, technical and operational conditions within the Internet itself.

The policy authority for country code top-level-domains (ccTLDs) rests with the government or appropriate public authority and the Internet communities of the country, region or territory concerned.

The global coordination of these functions is currently undertaken by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

Many governments and international organizations support and actively participate in the work of ICANN through its Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) <http://gac.icann.org/contact/gac_representatives.htm>.

ICANN is an international, not-for-profit private sector organization that operates as a

public/private partnership and is responsible for the global coordination of the Internet technical management functions described in paragraph 44, i.e. the Internet's unique identifier systems. ICANN, as a public/private partnership ensures that all stakeholders are able to participate in this global technical coordination.

Suggested replacement text for paragraph 44:

"**44. Management of Internet names and addresses: The management of Internet's unique identifier systems must occur through open and transparent means, supporting private sector-led industry self-regulation, while taking into account the interests of the public sector and civil society, and respecting multilingualism. To ensure the global interoperability, stability and security of the Internet, the coordination responsibility for root servers, domain names, and Internet Protocol (IP) address assignment should rest with a private sector organization operating in the global public interest. The policy authority for country code top-level-domain names (ccTLDs) should be coordinated at the global level and should be the responsibility of the government or public authority and Internet communities in those countries, regions or territories.**"

(2) WSIS Draft action plan, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, paragraph 33:

"*33. Internet governance: A transparent and democratic governance of the Internet shall constitute the basis for the development of a global culture of cyber-security. An [international][intergovernmental] organisation should ensure multilateral, democratic and transparent management of root servers, domain names and Internet Protocol (IP) address assignment.*"

Note. Having reviewed the history of this document, we believe only [intergovernmental] should be bracketed.

We would also like to point out that in "*Section II Observers' contribution to the draft Action Plan*" paragraph 33 includes "inter-governmental". However, Observers' comments submitted during PrepCom2 in Geneva did not mention "inter-governmental".

Comment:

We emphasize our comments above describing the management, operation and coordination of the systems that support Internet naming and addressing, and that many governments and international organizations participate in and contribute to the work of ICANN, and that ICANN is a private sector organization operating as public/private partnership. We reiterate that "Internet Governance" is not appropriate terminology, "governance" is not synonymous with Internet identifiers.

Suggested replacement text for paragraph 33:

"**33. Management of Internet names and addresses: The open and transparent coordination of the Internet shall constitute the basis for the development of a global culture of cyber-security. A private sector organization operating in the global public interest in an open and transparent manner, shall preserve and enhance the operational stability, reliability, security, and global interoperability of the Internet's unique identifier systems.**

Action: The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) encourages the world's governments, private sector and civil society to support and participate in the important and specific mission of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Particular attention should be given to ensuring that Internet technologists from developing nations are able to participate in and contribute to the existing mechanisms for the management, coordination and operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems."

3. Universal Participation in Global Policymaking for ICTs

Enabling meaningful participation in global policymaking for ICTs was recognized by the DOT Force and is a focus of the work of the UN ICT Task Force, but has been overlooked in the WSIS.

Global policymaking for Information and Communications Technologies occurs in many different venues. Forums ranging from intergovernmental regimes negotiating on multilateral and regional basis, to private sector industry self-governance regimes negotiating across industrial sectors, are addressing issues that have great economic, cultural and social implications for all society. Their work has a profound effect on developing nations, yet developing nations are all to often absent or under represented in their discussions. We suggest that both the WSIS declaration and action plan must make reference to the lack of participation by developing nations in global policymaking for ICTs and therefore include specific measures to support their meaningful participation.

<u>WSIS Draft declaration of Principles, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E, 21 March 2003:</u>

Section *6) Enabling environment*

Insert new paragraph 41 (follows after current "*40. Market environment*").

"**41. Universal participation in global policymaking for Information and Communication Technologies: Global policymaking for ICTs occurs in many different venues, ranging from intergovernmental regimes negotiating on a multilateral or regional basis, to new types of industry self-management and self-regulation working on issues from ICT governance to standards-making. Representatives from all nations must be able to participate in a meaningful manner in all venues where global policy for ICTs is made.**"

<u>WSIS Draft action plan, Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, 21 March 2003:</u>

Section *6) Enabling environment*

Insert new paragraph 30 (follows after current "*29. Market environment*").

"30. Universal participation in global policymaking: All organizations and forums involved in making global policy and standards for ICTs should be Open, Fair and Inclusive in their decision making processes and, where necessary, create additional mechanisms specifically to address issues around developing countries and economies. Such organizations and forums should ensure that representatives of developing countries and economies are able to participate in a meaningful way to all discussions and processes."

4. Other specific comments

Where "open source software" is mentioned, in all cases it would be more accurate to say "free software and open source software".

In the draft declaration, paragraph 18 may read as if the recommendation is only to address national infrastructure. We suggest that regional, and international infrastructure and connectivity should be specifically mentioned.

The role of governments in promoting best practices in the use of ICTs, governments as leading by example, governments as a potential catalyst for demand through the aggregation of public spending on ICTs has been overlooked.

Thank you.

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