
Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/2-E
10 March 2003
English only

UNEP and partners



Comments on the draft Declaration and Action Plan from Prepcom-2

2003-02-28

By: *The Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI)¹, United Nations University, WWF, and The Club of Rome*

Please contact the following persons about this document:

Chris Tuppen (GeSI Chair), chris.tuppen@bt.com, Ama Dadson (GeSI Coordinator), adadson@unep.fr, Dennis Pamlin, (WWF), dennis@pamlin.net, Raoul Weiler (Club of Rome), raoul.weiler@skynet.be

We welcome the fact that the draft declaration now includes references to sustainable development and recognises that ICT can affect the environment. However the environmental issue is not dealt with in a systematic way and is totally absent from the action plan.

In addition the draft declaration does not clearly state that sustainable development includes an environmental perspective and it does not make the necessary distinction between direct environmental impacts from the products themselves and the positive and/or negative environmental impacts that result from the use of ICT. Without such a systematic approach we will lose a great opportunity to start shaping a sustainable framework for ICT. However, with only relative minor amendments the final declaration and action plan could make an important contribution to sustainable development.

Below we first give a short background to the issue in front of us, after that we present suggestions for specific language that we believe should be included.

BACKGROUND:

Increasing population, economic activity and consumptive lifestyles are placing unsustainable burdens on the earth's natural systems and finite resources. The nature of information and communication technologies enables significant and rapid changes to modes of living and associated consumption patterns. This can result in both positive and negative economic, environmental, and social impacts depending on the existing framework.

Creating prosperity through the wise and efficient use of resources has been identified as the over-arching sustainable development challenge as addressed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (WSSD) in 2002. The WSIS must ensure that the final summit outputs and recommendations are supportive of sustainable development and build on the work carried out during the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in 2002 and other relevant international agreements. The environmental dimension must be given sufficient weight.

There can be no doubt that we are on the cusp of a new revolution - moving from the industrial age to the knowledge age. In this transition we must ensure two things: firstly, that all can benefit; secondly, that we make this transition in a way that preserves the environment for future generations. These aims are of paramount importance. Unless they are both meaningfully embraced, the introduction of ICT threatens to result in a worsening - rather than reversal - of current negative trends.

¹ *Business, UNEP and the ITU working in Partnership*

In order to make a positive contribution to sustainable development:

The **Political Declaration** should clarify that:

A sustainable and inclusive global information society is a society where prosperity is created through wise and efficient use of resources and where humans live in harmony with nature.

The Political Declaration should also:

1. Encourage public- private partnerships to develop infrastructure and applications in areas where the market needs support, e.g. environmental protection (climate mitigation, resource efficiency, monitoring and information gathering) and poverty eradication.
2. State that countries, at all stages of economic development, should recognize ICT as an integral component of sustainable development strategies, not merely as a valuable industry in its own right.
3. Acknowledge the different important roles ICT can have for the environment. Special attention should be given to the following areas: increased efficiency in industry and buildings, de-materialisation, transportation substitution, increased transport efficiency, increased efficiency in production and planning, environmental education, monitoring and data collection.

The **Plan of Action** should:

1. Ask all relevant international economic institutions (WTO, WB, IMF, the regional development banks [including EIB], ECAs, etc) to develop, and by 2005, present a strategy for the use of ICT for sustainable development, and as an effective instrument to help us achieve the MDGs as well as relevant environmental agreements.
2. Recommend that Governments and the private sector explore, and by 2005 implement, different instruments that can help to extract the maximum environmental benefits from ICT and speed the development of sustainability solutions throughout society.
3. Mainstream information and communication technology into sustainability development. Principal action areas should include:
 - a. Dematerialization (reducing the use of natural resources and reducing waste)
 - b. Consumption and production patterns (the role for ICT to reduce environmental impacts)

Actions specific to the **WSIS preparatory** process should include:

1. At WSIS Prepcom III and the WSIS:

At least one high level round table discussing the overarching environmental implications of ICT. This round table could cut across a number of WSIS themes especially ICT for development, infrastructure development, access to information, enabling regulatory and policy framework and ICT applications.

2. Workshops/skill-shares on important areas such:

ICT and reduced energy-use, ICT and reduced material-use (dematerialization and phase-out of toxic materials), ICT and reduced land-use & ICT and transport policy, ICT and business strategies for sustainable development in a knowledge society, ICT and a policy framework for sustainable development in a knowledge society, e-waste, application of renewable energy technologies to ICT infrastructure in rural locations and e-learning for sustainability.