

Consumers International
Comments to WSIS Draft Action Plan
(with Consumers International's comments/additions/deletions in RED)

Draft action plan

Based on discussions in the Working Group of Sub-Committee 2
(WSIS/PC-2/DT-3 revised)

[NOTE: The whole text is in square brackets]

Section I

1. The Information Society is an evolving concept, the realization of which is driven by all societies—and in this process all of them can learn from each other. At present, the Information Society has reached different levels of development across the regions and countries of the world. As such, it would be necessary and more effective to design a flexible Action Plan that can be used as a reference framework and as a source of guidance and inspiration at regional and national levels, and that is established in accordance with the Millennium Declaration Goals.

A. List of issues

- 1) **Information and communication infrastructure: financing and investment, affordability, development and sustainability**
2. **Bridging the digital divide:** Our countries are committed to taking action to overcome the digital divide, which reflects and is a factor in the differences that exist between and within countries in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects, education, health and access to knowledge.
3. **Universal access:** In order to achieve affordable and universal access in basic services it is essential:
 - To utilize existing and new technologies to provide connectivity to all.
 - To develop connectivity for institutions accessible to the public such as schools, libraries, post offices, etc.

- To study and promote relevant solutions **such as competitively-neutral subsidy regimes** adapted to the environment for ICTs in remote and rural areas.
 - To establish multi-purpose community access points to ensure inclusive access to information and social services, particularly in rural areas.
 - To evolve the concept of universal access/service to reflect advances and opportunities offered by technology, existing infrastructures, market development and changes in user demand.
4. **Broadband**: It is essential to strengthen regional and international broadband network infrastructure in order to provide the capacity to match the needs of countries and their citizens and for the delivery of new services.
 5. **Low cost equipment**: The creation and provision of low-cost access equipment shall be an integral part of the agenda for reducing the digital divide.
 6. **Low cost connectivity**: Universal access policies shall promote the best possible level of connectivity at a reasonable cost for under-served areas. In particular, unused satellite capacity should be used to improve low cost connectivity in developing countries.
 7. **Convergence**: Technological convergence must be monitored with a view to integrating traditional and new ICTs in order to create alternative forms of access that can help narrow the digital divide.
 8. **Interconnection**: The optimization of connections among major information networks should be promoted through the creation of regional traffic hubs to reduce interconnection costs and allow the penetration of access networks to be broadened.

Governments should enact regulations and policies designed to:

- **ensure open and non-discriminatory access by content and service providers to broadband platforms owned by others;**
- **ensure open and non-discriminatory by content providers to digital and interactive television systems; and to**
- **favour the use of common and open ICT standards for access by both service providers and users to new ICT networks and services, such as digital broadcasting.**

8A) Interoperability and compatibility: different products and services must be interoperable so that, in practice, any service can be accessed on any appropriate network on any relevant device.

9. **Interconnection fees**: Interconnection fees for the use of networks and infrastructure shall be set on the basis of objective, non-discriminatory and market-led parameters.
10. **Regional infrastructure**: Regional ICT backbones and exchange points should be implemented to facilitate traffic exchange between countries.
11. **Environmental protection**: Governments and the business community must initiate actions as well as develop and implement programmes and projects for the environmentally safe disposal (including recycling) of discarded ICT hardware and parts.

2) Access to information and knowledge

12. Individuals and organizations should benefit from enhanced access to knowledge and information.

12A) Access by persons with disabilities: ICT standards should be based on the concept of ‘Design for all’: i.e., designing for as many people as possible while acknowledging that there is a minority of disabled people with severe impairments who need adaptations or specialist products

13. **Access to public domain information:** Information in the public domain should be of high quality, easily accessible for all, including the disabled.

Governments should adopt electronic freedom of information acts and publish all public information on websites.

14. **Open standards and open-source software: Open and interoperable platforms and standards can ensure the freedom of use and choice for all consumers. Moreover, open source standards can help reduce costs, and increase application.**

Development and deployment of open-source software and standards for ICT networking should be encouraged:

- Open and flexible international and interoperable standards should be promoted to ensure that all can utilize the technology and associated content and services to their maximum potential.
- Open-source software, including UNESCO software CDS/ISIS, multi-platform and open platform as well as interoperability standards, should be used more broadly to provide freedom of choice and to facilitate access to ICTs by all citizens, at an affordable cost.
- Standardization efforts in the field of terminology and other language resources should be intensified.

15. **Information flows:** Guidelines on Internet contracts should be established and existing contracts for Internet traffic renegotiated.

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

16. The full and effective involvement of all stakeholders is vital in developing new ICT applications. The role, responsibilities and goals of each stakeholder should be clearly defined.

17. **Cooperation among Stakeholders:** Increased cooperation and partnerships are needed between governmental and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and the media, for effective design and implementation of various initiatives, giving priority to locally-available human resources:

- The public sector should explore innovative ways to correct market failures and foster competition to bring the Information Society to all sectors of the economy and society, especially those living in poverty.

The private sector should play an important role in the development and diffusion of ICTs.

Civil society, including NGOs, should work closely with communities in strengthening ICT-related initiatives.

Mass media – in their various forms – are recognized as important means of fostering public information, societal development and social cohesion.

International and regional organizations, including financial and development institutions should play an important role in integrating the use of ICTs in the development process and making available the necessary resources.

International organization should be mandated to mainstream ICTs in their work programmes and asked to prepare action plans to support the fulfillment of the goals indicated in the declaration of principles and in this action plan.

18. **Resource mobilization:** All stakeholders are urged to mobilize resources for the development of the Information Society. This could include:

- increasing investment in telecommunication infrastructure,
- building human capacity,
- developing policy frameworks,
- developing culturally sensitive local content and applications.

19. **ICT manufacturing capabilities:** It is essential for governments to encourage technology transfer and investment, including venture capital, in the creation of national and regional ICT production facilities:

- Priority shall be placed on strengthening local micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through their integration into the digital economy. Partnership mechanisms and business models should be developed for fostering clustering and partnership between SMEs in developing countries and industrialized countries.
- Public policies must foster innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The development of technology-based firms should be encouraged through venture capital funds, technology parks and business incubators, franchising IT clubs, together with the participation of academic institutions and research networks.
- Joint stakeholder efforts to address local obstacles and seek sustainable solutions for infrastructure in underprivileged areas should be encouraged.
- Governments should implement targeted monetary and fiscal policies to support the development of SMEs in the ICT sector (for instance, by relaxing duties and import taxes, and by initiating investment funds).

19A) Consumer participation in standardisation: it is vital that standards elaborated for Information Society products and services take into account the views of the consumer. Consumer participation and training at all levels of the standardisation process should be supported, especially in the developing countries.

4) Capacity building: human resources development, education, and training

20. An ambitious and innovative approach is required in capacity building, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by ICTs.

21. **ICTs in education:** The use of ICTs could contribute to more efficiency and better quality in education services. They should also contribute to reaching broad target groups:

- Information regarding the potential of new technologies in education should be disseminated through exchange of information on best practices, awareness campaigns, pilot projects, demonstrations and public discussions.

- ICTs should be incorporated in school curricula.
 - ICTs should be used to train trainers and to ensure better delivery of education at all levels, including outside the educational structure, at the workplace and in the home.
 - Teacher's skills and curriculum resources need increased support so that teachers can act as a gateway to the Information Society.
 - There should be a large -scale integration of ICTs in primary education to generate a dynamic process towards e-literacy.
 - The capacity of developing and least developed countries to apply ICTs effectively in education must be enhanced through regional and international cooperation.
 - **Governments and other organizations, such as the private sector and the universities, should make publicly available information on the risks of online activity and strategies to minimize those risks;**
22. **Capacity building for ICT use:** People must have enhanced levels of ICT literacy and ICT skills to make the best use of the Information Society:
- Relevant education and training should be promoted at every level, from primary to adult, to open up opportunities for as many people as possible, and especially the disadvantaged.
 - Women should be given equal opportunities for obtaining training in the ICT field.
 - Young people should be equipped with knowledge and skills in ICTs to prepare them for full participation in the Information Society.
 - E-literacy courses should be aimed at training the population in the use of ICTs with a view to producing useful and socially meaningful content for the benefit of all.
 - Intergovernmental organizations should provide resources for capacity building in ICTs.
 - All those still outside the reach of the formal education system should be offered education and information tailored to their need and culture.
 - Community media should be used in capacity building programmes.
23. **Training ICT specialists:** Basic and advanced education should be improved to help create a critical mass of highly qualified and skilled ICT professionals and experts:
- Education in network infrastructure development and operation is critical for the availability of efficient, reliable, competitive and secure ICT network services.
 - The formation and maintenance of a workforce to act as a pillar of the Information Society shall be undertaken in close cooperation with the private sector and civil society in general.
 - South to North brain drain should be prevented, in particular through the creation by governments of an adequate environment to keep trained people.

5) Safety

23A) ICT products and services should be safe for all consumers, children and disabled people included. When developing ICT standards, any health and safety issues should be assessed.

6) Privacy

24. Privacy protection: Privacy has emerged as one of the critical issues for the continued growth of electronic commerce and the use of ICTs generally.

- Privacy should be recognized as a human right in relevant national and international legal documents;
- Organizations should respect the principles set out in the *OECD Guidelines Governing the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data (1980)*, taking into account the *OECD Ministerial Declaration on the Protection of Privacy on Global Networks (1998)*. Similar Guidelines should be adopted by non-OECD countries, and governments should cooperate in the enforcement of data protection laws internationally;
- Governments should enact comprehensive laws protecting personal data in both the public and private sectors, and giving individuals clear rights to control the collection, use and disclosure of their personal information, and an effective means of exercising those rights; Voluntary efforts by businesses to establish and respect best practices of privacy protection should be encouraged, but self-regulation should not substitute for regulatory standards in this area. Governments should ensure there is adequate oversight and enforcement of the laws.
- Governments should adopt an international convention on the protection of personal data and privacy. Existing legal instruments based on the CoE treaty #108 and the EU Data Protection Directive should be the basis.

6B) Security, ~~privacy and credibility~~

24. Secure and reliable infrastructure: The security of networks has emerged as ~~one of the critical issues for the continued growth of electronic commerce and the use of the new technologies more generally~~ another important issue in the development and use of ICTs.

- All stakeholders concerned with ICT issues should take the necessary steps to enhance security, user confidence and other aspects of information and system/network integrity in order to avoid the risk of wholesale disruption and destruction of the network systems on which they are increasingly dependent.
- This will require appropriate national legislative frameworks that safeguard the public and general interest and that foster electronic communications and transactions.
- It will also require raising awareness of information security issues, and the rapidly evolving complexity, capacity and reach of information technology, the anonymity offered by these technologies, and the trans-national nature of communication frameworks. Special mechanisms shall be put in place to encourage the banking sector to develop secure and reliable applications to facilitate online transactions.
- **State measures to enhance security should not unduly infringe on individual privacy.**

25. Information Security: Effective information security could be guaranteed not only by technology, but also by education and training, policy and law, and international cooperation. The United Nations should be supported in its efforts aimed at:

- Assessing the information security situation, including harmful interference or abuse using information and communication systems and information resources.
- Developing methods for protection and creating a rapid reaction organization to deal with security violations, as well as exchanging information and technology to combat violations.
- Studying the long-term possibility of creating an international convention on the security of information and communication networks.

Recognizing the principle of fair, equitable and appropriate access to ICTs for all countries, special attention should be paid to the fact that ICTs can potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security, and may adversely affect the integrity of the infrastructure within States, to the detriment of their security in both civil and military fields.

26. Creating a global culture of cyber-security: In the long term, a “global culture of cyber-security”, should be developed, based on a common understanding of regulations and appropriate mechanisms for information and technology exchange and international cooperation. It is important to strike the right balance between measures to enhance security and the need to ensure the protection of data and privacy as well as to avoid the creation of new barriers to trade. Due attention should be given to the principle of technological neutrality.

27. Fighting cybercrime : Protection from civil and criminal offences (“cybercrime”) is essential in order to build trust in information networks:

- A multi-pronged approach is needed to tackle cybercrime, on all fronts, with emphasis on preventive approaches, national guidelines and regional and international cooperation. At the same time, action to address cybercrime and to ensure a safe and secure Information Society must respect the sovereignty of nations and maintain respect for the constitutional and other rights of all persons, including freedom of expression.

Existing legal instruments, such as the *Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime* , offer the international community a foundation from which to build.

6) Enabling environment

28. Good governance: To maximize the economic and social benefits of the Information Society, governments need to create a trustworthy, transparent, and non-discriminatory legal, regulatory and policy environment, capable of promoting technological innovation and competition, thus favouring the necessary investments, mainly from the private sector, in the deployment of infrastructures and development of new services:

- Commitment and responsibility should be defined at the national and regional levels.
- With the active participation of all stakeholders, the development of an enabling environment should give due regard to the rights and obligations of all stakeholders in such areas as freedom of expression, consumer protection, privacy, security, intellectual property rights, open-source solutions and management of Internet addresses and domain names, while also maintaining economic incentives and ensuring trust and confidence for business activities

- **The membership of government-appointed bodies engaging in the regulation of ICT services should be balanced, taking into account the often conflicting interests of businesses and consumers. Governments and regulatory bodies should use open, transparent processes, such as public hearings, to make decisions on matters of price, quality of service, expansion of service, and any other matters that could affect the consumer interest.**
 - **Protection of Children: taking into account the enormous impact that ICTs have on them, special attention should be paid to the protection of children from the point of view of safety, privacy, etc. Appropriate standards can help parents supervise the unwanted influence of electronic material on their children.**
- 29. Market environment:** The availability of telecommunication infrastructures and affordable telecommunications services and ICT equipment are prerequisites for accessing and using ICTs for all:
- Competition, including in the local access network, should be promoted to drive down prices and to ensure the ongoing modernization of networks and services.
 - **To the extent that market forces cannot deliver universal access to basic information and communication services at affordable rates, government and/or regulatory intervention is necessary.**
 - Investment in rural communications should be encouraged through an attractive legal framework.
 - Duties levied on ICT hardware and software should be removed.
 - Monopoly in mass communication should be avoided and diversity in the sources of information should be promoted.
 - In order to secure prompt settlement of disputes, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) should be considered along with normal judicial proceedings.
- 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.
- Standardisation is moving from traditional product standardisation to new areas such as environment, corporate social responsibility, and services. One of the main objectives should be to develop standards that ensure adequate levels of safety, security of information, interoperability and most importantly, accessibility to all consumers.**
- 31. Spectrum management:** The radio frequency spectrum should be managed in the public and general interest and in accordance with the basic principle of legality, with full observance of national laws and regulations and international agreements governing the management of frequencies.
- 32. Consumer protection:**
- 32A Governments should update their domestic consumer protection laws and procedural rules so as to address new problems raised by the use of ICT, in particular electronic commerce in a way that provides consumers with at least the same level of protection online as they enjoy offline.**

Laws facilitating electronic commerce should always permit consumers to reject the use of electronic communication, and should protect consumers from unreasonable reliance by businesses on such mode of communication;

The OECD and APEC Guidelines for Consumer Protection in Electronic Commerce should be implemented by all member countries by 2007;

Similar norms should be adopted by other regions and countries, possibly through a UN organization;

Business self-regulatory practices which meet and exceed these standards should be encouraged. In particular, online businesses should be encouraged to improve the credibility of information they provide so as not to mislead or deceive consumers;

Governments should cooperate in the cross-border enforcement of laws designed to combat fraudulent misleading or unfair commercial conduct;

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.
34. **Intellectual property rights:** It is important to ensure a balance between intellectual property rights (IPR) and the public interest:
 - While IPRs play a vital role in fostering innovation in software, e-commerce and associated trade and investment, there is a need to promote initiatives to ensure fair balance between IPRs and the interests of the users of information, while also taking into consideration the global consensus achieved on IPR issues in multilateral organizations.
 - An appropriate legal framework should be defined for the development of a public domain of information and knowledge.
 - Protection against unfair use of indigenous knowledge should be developed.
 - **Standardisation process: new IPRs policies should be adopted, based on the principles of openness of standards and sources, which are publicly available, transparently agreed and commercially exploitable on a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory basis.**
 - **Digital Rights Management technologies: access to e-content should be fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory with special regards to assistive technologies for elderly and disabled people.**

7) Promotion of development-oriented ICT applications for all

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.
36. **E-Government:** Public administrations should use ICT tools to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency—at all levels of government, and in particular at the local level:
 - In the delivery of public services to citizens and to enterprises.
 - In the design of online services, adapted to the needs of citizens and businesses.
 - In the better management of financial, human and public resources and goods.

- **In the provision of information on consumer protection laws and remedies.**

Governments should use ICT tools to facilitate to the public their involvement in decision making processes that contribute with the build up of democratic institutions and leads to an effective e-governance. E-Freedom of Information is crucial for the achievement of such goals.

Governments should provide capacity-building and training services to small enterprises and content providers, focused on the implementation of guidelines and best practices for consumer protection online.

37. **E-Business:** Enterprises, particularly SMEs, can use ICTs to foster innovation, realize gains in productivity, fight against poverty, reduce transaction costs and benefit from network externalities:
 - Through the adoption of an enabling environment and based on a widely-available broadband infrastructure, Governments should seek to stimulate private investment, new applications and content development and foster public - private partnerships.
 - Governments should adopt a twofold approach: setting the rules and using e-Business in their interaction with the business community.
 - ICTs can be used to bring consumer benefits and satisfaction by widening the choice of potential suppliers, beyond the constraints of location. The private sector should help to raise awareness and to ensure training on the specific issues related to e-Business.
 - Use of digital technologies can enhance the role of enterprises in promoting entrepreneurship, liberalizing trade, the accumulation of knowledge, the upgrading of skills, thereby increasing productivity, incomes and jobs and promoting qualitative improvement of working life.
- **Methods of testing ICTs should be standardised so as to provide data to consumers for easy comparison before purchase, (e.g. data on energy consumption, cost, necessary equipment/knowledge, restrictions, safety, instructions).**
38. **E-learning:** Access to education and knowledge is essential for economic, social and cultural development, and as a means of personal empowerment, community development and business efficiency. Without neglecting traditional literacy, ICT networks have the potential to offer new educational opportunities to all groups in all areas, and a wider delivery of education:
 - E-Learning should contribute to achieving universal primary education worldwide through better delivery of education and better training of teachers, and to offer improved conditions for lifelong learning, encompassing people that are outside the “normal” education process, and for improving professional skills.
 - Implementation of affordable and universal educational programmes, content, broadband networks and hardware should be promoted.
 - The introduction and development of ICTs in various schools and other learning institutions shall be supported through the establishment and maintenance of a human resources network that institutionalizes the ongoing training of teachers and instructors, who are the backbone of innovation.

- Advantage shall be taken of best practices to create high-quality, readily accessible teaching material from all over the world to facilitate knowledge transfer to the national level.
 - Special attention shall be devoted to multilingual training and to the use and development of translation software.
 - **Stakeholders should work together to develop and implement media campaigns designed to enable and empower individual users of ICTs.**
 - **Educational courses on information technology at schools and universities should include consumer and privacy protection as a key element.**
39. **E-health:** Access to healthcare information and services is a basic right. Many countries lack adequate healthcare facilities and personnel, particularly in rural and remote areas. ICTs should be incorporated on a mass scale in the field of health care with a view to improving resource use, patient satisfaction, personalized care, and the coordination of public health-care systems, private institutions and the academic sector:
- ICTs should be used to promote social inclusion of all members of society by enabling equitable access to healthcare services, as well as empowering citizens to better manage their own health and to participate more effectively in the healthcare process.
 - Innovative solutions and options must be devised for providing health services to under-served areas.
 - Another e-health priority shall be the prevention, treatment and monitor and control of the spread of dangerous and contagious diseases—specifically HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—in particular, through the creation of a common information system.
 - ICTs can be used to provide e-health supports to specific groups (such as the elderly, the chronically ill and children).
 - An ICT-based e-health network should be established to provide medical assistance following humanitarian disaster and emergencies.
 - A system should be established to provide e-health services to the populations in remote regions of the globe.
 - **Adequate measures should be taken to ensure that health information provided over the Internet is accurate, up-to-date, reliable and free from any commercial interests.**
40. **E-employment:** ICTs can provide tools for new job creation and enhance competitiveness and productivity through teleworking, enterprise networking and efficient linking of job seekers and employers. Best practices and new labour laws for e-workers and e-employers should be developed at the international level. The role of the ILO is fundamental in this respect. Telecommuting should be promoted to allow the best brains of the developing world to live in their societies and work anywhere.
41. **E-environment:** Systems should be established to prevent man-made disasters, using ICTs to monitor the operators of production and transport systems that pose the gravest potential threats to the environment.

8) Cultural identity and linguistic diversity, local content and media development

42. **Cultural and linguistic diversity.** Linguistic and cultural diversity enriches the development of society by giving expression to a range of different values and ideas. For this purpose:

- Information should be presented in the language and cultural context most familiar to the user, thereby further encouraging the use of ICTs.
- To foster mutual understanding, diversity of cultural expression should be preserved and promoted, through the creation of varied information content and the digitization of the educational, scientific and cultural heritage.
- ICTs should be used to help preserve diversity and indigenous knowledge and traditions.
- Means should be developed for enabling access to information resources in different languages, in particular online translation tools.
- Means should be developed for processing information in local languages: for instance, standard character sets and language codes, dictionaries, general and application software.
- Non-written languages should be preserved by using audio support.

43. **Content:** Creation of local content should be supported:

- Public policy should foster the creation of varied information content, which helps to preserve and disseminate local and national culture, language and heritage, and to safeguard family and community cohesion.
- Production and exchange of appropriate local content available in a user's mother tongue is of vital importance.
- Developing countries must have the capacity for developing hardware and software, as well as content that is relevant to different segments of population.
- Content referencing, based on public-private partnership to make web content more accessible, should be encouraged.
- Local authorities have an important role to play, because for citizens they represent the first level of contact with the administrations and they could also foster the development of local communities: local content development, digital archives, diverse forms of digital media, content translation and adaptation should be supported. **E-Freedom of Information is a requirement to fulfil this goal.**
- Literacy software should be produced in local languages.
- Archives should be preserved as the memory of humankind, and systems should be developed to ensure continued access to archived digital information and multimedia content.
- Libraries and archives should be supported as content providers.

44. **Media:** ICT and media as a whole should stimulate linguistic and cultural diversity, including through the facilitation of exchange of local content:

- Investment should be made in regional media content as well as new technologies.
- Independent production and pluralistic media should be supported.
- Appropriate multilateral television networks should be promoted.

9) Identifying and overcoming barriers to the achievement of the Information Society with a human perspective

B. Objectives

45. Examples of possible concrete and comprehensive actions could include:

- a) **Benchmarks:** The following could serve as benchmarks for actions to be taken:
- all villages to be connected by 2010, with a community access point by 2015;
 - all universities to be connected by 2005, all secondary schools by 2010 and all primary schools by 2015;
 - all hospitals to be connected by 2005 and health centres by 2010;
 - 90 per cent of the world's population to be within wireless coverage by 2010 and 100 per cent by 2015;
 - all central governments departments to have a website and email address by 2005 and all local governments departments by 2010.
- b) **E-Strategies:** Developing national e-strategies for all countries within three years, including the necessary human capacity building.
- c) **Global Digital Compact:** Launching of a "Global Digital Compact" as a new pattern for partnership and interaction between governments and non-governmental actors, based on division of labour and specialized responsibilities, as well as on identified specific and common interests, to work together to achieve ICT development goals (e.g. governments create stimulating regulatory environment and fiscal incentives, business bring in technology and made available simple applications, non-governmental organizations undertake awareness campaigns and work at community level etc.) *(a model that could start from the institutional relationships already existing in ITU, with ITU as coordinator).*
- d) **Digital development index:** Launching and gradually developing an aggregate ICT Development (Digital Opportunity) Index and publish it annually or every two years in an ICT Development Report, where ranking of countries will be accompanied by analytical work on policies and their implementation. *(ITU is to catalyze and combine in a coherent structure the existing experiences in various organizations, universities, think-tanks etc.)*
- e) **Handbook on good practices and success stories:** Elaborating and launching a "Handbook on good practices and success stories", as a compilation of contributions from all stakeholders, in a concise and convincing format, which is to be re-issued periodically and turned into a permanent experience-sharing exercise.
- f) **Training content workers:** Equipping and training content workers in the LDCs, such as archivists, librarians, scientists, teachers and journalists in making use of the expertise and operational capacity of the relevant international professional organizations.
- g) **Curriculum revision:** Revising the curricula of the primary and secondary schools in all countries, within three years, in order to meet the challenges of the Information Society.
- h) **World languages on the Internet:** Create the necessary technical (software and hardware) conditions, which would permit all languages in the world to be present and used on the Internet.

C. Strategies programmes, methods for implementation

46. Governments, the private sector, civil society, the media and multilateral organizations all have a role in the evolution towards an Information Society.

47. **Governments** in particular have a role in setting and implementing comprehensive, forward-looking and sustainable e-Strategies, adapted to the specific requirements of different communities and reflecting the stage of development and the structural characteristics of the national economy. This should include:
 - Establishing regulatory frameworks.
 - Renewing models for public action and actively shaping the transformation towards an Information Society.
 - Preparing the future generation for the Information Society, and creating an environment of continuous learning.
 - Ensuring the full ownership by all stakeholders of the e-Strategies that are elaborated.
48. **Private sector** involvement is crucial for a sound and sustainable development of infrastructures, content and application.
 - The private sector is not only a market player but plays a role in a wider political and social context, i.e. helping countries to develop ICTs and overcome the digital divide.
 - The private sector can be involved in practical partnerships for innovative applications, for instance, in e-Government initiatives.
49. **Civil society** involvement is crucial for creating an equitable Information Society, based on sustainable economic and social development and gender justice:
 - Civil society involvement is vital in the take-up and social acceptance of the Information Society.
 - Civil society can help to strengthen the value aspect in the triangle of regulation, markets and values.
50. **Mass media** – in their various forms – are recognized as essential requirement for freedom of expression and a guarantee of the plurality of information:
 - The media provide an important means of fostering public information, societal development and social cohesion.
51. **Multilateral organizations** have a key role in providing guidance, facilitating peer dialogue, exchange of experience and best practices, offering technical assistance in the design of e-Strategies and, in some cases, complementing the role of governments and other actors.
52. **Performance monitoring**: To be effective, beyond the identification of goals, the strategies should include timeframes, indicators and mechanisms for monitoring performance based not only on quantitative but also qualitative criteria. In the case of smaller countries, regional strategies can contribute to the emergence of larger markets, offering more attractive conditions for private sector investment as well as for a competitive environment. Furthermore ICTs could be of particular relevance in the development context, because they offer opportunities to Public Administrations, help attract private investments and allow for leapfrogging using new and advanced technologies.
53. **Specific initiatives**: The development of a strategy entails understanding what to promote, where to promote it, and how to tailor and implement activities to achieve maximum impact. This should capitalize on existing national, regional and global efforts. Specific initiatives could include:

- Promoting long-term government spending on R&D and higher education, with the aim of mastering and adapting specific ICT solutions.
- Providing incentives and regulatory schemes that would enhance private sector capabilities in terms of human resource development, infrastructure and institution building.
- Providing tax incentives for start up ICT companies.
- Fostering the scale-up of locally successful ICT-related projects dealing with priority applications like health and education programmes.
- Focusing part of the R&D programmes on low purchasing power markets, including research on appropriate technologies and innovative marketing and distribution mechanisms, including the taking advantage of the diasporas.
- Creating a network of IT consultants.
- Developing a platform for showcasing applications.

D. International cooperation and financing

54. **International cooperation.** Close international cooperation among national authorities, stakeholders and international organizations in all aspects of the Information Society is more vital today than ever:

- To this end, advantage shall be taken of the opportunities offered by regional financial institutions and the UN Regional Commissions.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship is an important goal. For this, it is necessary to establish certain basic structures, e.g. conducive regulatory frameworks and access to market information for businesses.
- Encouraging cyber-volunteer programmes, notably in relation to NGOs, activities regarding basic ICT training to marginalized groups, or in relation to specific ICT applications.
- Fostering a cumulative knowledge process by systematic networking between grassroots initiatives, by creation of websites, by facilitating exchange of information and experience, and through dissemination of good practices.

55. **Financing:** A commitment to financing the different initiatives proposed in this action plan is an essential element in its successful implementation. This will require innovative partnerships between the public and private sectors:

- It is proposed to create a digital solidarity fund. The international community is called upon to provide technical and financial cooperation at both the multilateral and bilateral levels, in particular with a view to giving the opportunity to less developed countries to create their ICT infrastructure.
- This could include a commitment by the private sector to provide ICT goods and services at preferential conditions for specific categories of users, notably not-for-profit organizations directly involved in poverty alleviation.
- Developed countries should make available the official development assistance (ODA) commitments that they announced at the International Conference on Financing for Development. All countries should comply with all aspects of the consensus reached at that conference.

- Developed countries that have not already done so should take concrete action to fulfill the target level of 0.7 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product as ODA.
 - The unsustainable debt burden should be reduced through such actions as debt relief, debt cancellation and other innovative mechanisms geared to addressing the debt problem of developing countries, in particular the poorest and the most heavily indebted ones.
56. **Technology transfer:** It is important to facilitate access, and to transfer knowledge and technology on concessional, preferential and favourable terms to developing countries, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights, with the objective of enhancing the technological capacities and capabilities of developing countries, and improving their productivity and competitiveness in the world market.

E. Follow up

57. **Indicators:** A realistic international monitoring and benchmarking (both qualitative and quantitative) exercise, through comparable statistical indicators, should be developed to follow up the implementation of the action plan and to evaluate progress towards well identified goals, in particular progress toward the Information Society. Indicators and periodic reports may also provide a basis for benchmarking, peer reviews and contribute to the dissemination of best practices.
58. **Reporting:** International organizations and UN specialized agencies, particularly ITU, shall assess and report regularly on universal accessibility of ICTs and possible cases of discrimination. They shall also ensure non-discrimination for all members in their programmes, projects and contractual engagements, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of ICT sectors of developing countries.
- Support for implementation:** Organizations of the UN family should support countries in the follow up on the agreements adopted in this declaration and action plan.