

**Africa Civil Society Caucus**  
(supported by accredited civil society entities from Africa)

**Contributions to 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 Africa Civil Society Organizations:**

**31<sup>st</sup> May 2003**

**Contributions to the Draft declaration of Principles: Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E**

Section 1 A:

We recognize the digital divide between the North and the South is first of all at social, economic and political level. To end this divide, there is need for improvement of economic, social and political conditions of developing countries. Therefore, urgent attention should be paid to issues such as illiteracy in national and international languages of the great majority of African people, debt cancellation, institution of a modern electrical network, and eradication of severe health scourges on the continent.

Economic liberalism, structural adjustment programmes and economic globalizations should not prevent the existence of an efficient and strong public service, for this alone can safeguard social equity and universal services, including in critical fields such as education and health.

Section 1 B:

The information society should be a means of enhancing and deepening human rights. It should strengthen the organization of social, economic and cultural activity and be built on principles of diversity, transparency, and participation, social and economic justice and be inspired by equitable gender, cultural and regional perspectives.

Information society in Africa must be people centered and process orientated and not technologically determined.

#### **LIST OF ISSUES:**

1. Information and Communication infrastructure, financing and investment affordability, development, and sustainability:
  - The prerequisite for the creation of an information-society is the existence of an efficient information infrastructure. The poor state of Africa Information and Communications is presently the main constraint on the accessibility of many African countries to the information society and should be addressed as a matter of priority as to enable Africa's inclusion to the information society.
  - Recognize that ICTs are one of the tools and not the solution to the human development problems that Africa faces.
2. Access to information and knowledge:
  - Access to information and knowledge must be decentralized and be available at village level, in formats and languages that are accessible and culturally appropriate.
  - Access to information and knowledge must be recognized as a human right.
3. The Role of governments, business sector and civil society in the promotion of ICTs for development:
  - Every society is made up of sectors of people and institutions that have varying interests and perspectives. The dominance of sectors that have political power and access to capital negates the role of civil society and its orientation to a human rights framework. (It is important that those holding political power and capital do not dominate, thus negating the role of civil society and the Information Society from developing within a human rights framework.)
  - The role of civil society as an equal part of the triangle of partnership sectors must be asserted as a MUST in the outcomes of the WSIS.
  - Governments must ensure the development of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks with particular emphasis on addressing needs of the marginalized groups.
  - Governments and regulatory bodies should ensure that financing and licensing of ICT initiatives incorporate social obligations and responsibilities to communities thus minimising exploitative relations.
4. Capacity Building: human resources development, education and training:
  - Capacity building is the fundamental investment required for Africans to enter the information age and manage, develop and design

information technology that meets the particular needs of African societies.

- The role that skilled Africans in the Diaspora can play in developing human resources, education and training must be taken onboard.

5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs:

- Every country should adopt criminal laws against attacks on the security and integrity of computer systems, thereby criminalizing hacking, illegal interception, interference with the availability of computer systems.
- All countries should have clear procedures meeting international privacy standards for government access to communications and stored data when needed for the investigation of crimes. Such procedures both permit the government to carry out its investigations and also assure businesses and consumers that the government cannot unjustifiably monitor their communications.
- All stakeholders including governments, private sector and civil society organizations should raise awareness among individual users for them to better understand the technology and the privacy implications of transactions and interactions on the Internet including the provision of online resources for raising awareness about privacy regulations and best practices.

6. Enabling environment:

- Enabling environments must be located within a human rights framework and include the right to communicate as a prerequisite of the age that we live in.

7. ICT applications:

- ICT must be made relevant to the objective of poverty alleviation, not just through its effects on economic growth, but also by improving access to health care, education, and other social services.
- ICTs must be used for the benefit of the physically disabled to assist them to live a life of dignity.
- Decision makers have to recognize the need for policies that enable innovation, applications to address the needs of, and exploit the markets constituted by, people who are not literate, who often live in low density areas, and who are more likely to be using the public access than privately owned ICT facilities.

8. Cultural identity and linguistic diversity, local content and media development:

- The use of information technology is user driven. The content must be relevant to the user's needs or it will not be sought.

- Copyright laws have been technology-driven and have tended to follow the development of technologies pioneered by the developed world also laws regarding the protection of intellectual property were modelled on existing laws of developed countries. This disadvantages most African countries and developing countries by hindering the transfer and access to information and content development. Such laws should be reviewed to address this concern as a priority.
- Regulatory frameworks should ensure the protection of intellectual property rights of communities from exploitation.
- The convergence of traditional media - oral tradition, community media, storytelling - and ICT should all be ensured in centers that are also a place for illiterate people to use because they are not all text based.
- Special attention should also be paid to the role of gender in content creation.

9. Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society:

- The information society must be developed within a human rights framework. It should promote trust (ie. offer security and privacy) and confidence (ie. provide transparent and accountable governance and regulatory structure.)
- The Information Society and use of ICTs should promote African unity and peace.
- The Action Plan of the Information Society should be about tangible goals and not simply political declarations.

10. International and Regional Cooperation:

- Globalization is not working in favour of less developed nations, which remain dependent on industrialized nations for skills, resources and goods. This trend can only be reversed with a commitment to the development of African based and owned solutions and a willingness on the part of developed nations to relinquish profit currently being made in relationships of all kinds with Africa.
- Full participation MUST be ensured of both the developed countries and the developing countries in building a global information society:

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***Specific Comments to Draft declaration of Principles: Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/1 - E:***

## **Section. A and B**

- Para. 3: Sustainable development is not a complete enough term – it should be sustainable democratic development.
- para. 8: The Information Society should be people-centered, with citizens and communities at its core, and be at the service of humankind. It should be an environment where information and knowledge are [created and shared] disseminated and utilized by all sectors of the population, for their economic, social, cultural and political development.
- para. 10: "The respect for all internationally recognized human rights...." (the wording for this sentence should reflect not only respect for the legislation and agreements but also a commitment to implement).
- para. 10: Ensuring the adequate development of human capacity in order to be able to fully exploit the benefits that ICTs and building public awareness on the capabilities of ICTs to improve the lives of people by circumventing traditional obstacles like distance, time [and social and cultural obstacles].
- Para 11: The Africa Civil Society are wary of the Millennium Development goals and question the premise that a target of 7% growth will achieve a 15% reduction in poverty – cannot endorse them as they are.

## **Section C**

- para.22: Access to knowledge: Individuals, organisations [and communities] should benefit from access to information,....
- para. 25: Barriers: Barriers to equitable access result from differences in education and literacy levels, gender, [physical disability], age, income and connectivity, as well as from a lack of user training and cultural and linguistic.
- para.30: All people must be enabled to acquire the necessary skills in order to participate actively [and effectively] in, and understand, the Information Society.
- Para. 32: Capacity building to enable people [and communities] to benefit from the opportunities provided by ICTs: Individuals [and communities] should be engaged in defining their own needs.

- para 33: Training ICT specialists: The increasing demand for a wide range of ICTs specialists [drawn from a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, geographic locations, age groups and gender,] at all levels must be addressed.

***Comments on the Observers' contributions to the Draft declaration of Principles of March 21<sup>st</sup>: (Section II)***

**Section B:**

- para 7: This sentence is not understood?
- \*para. 10: It feels as if the emphasis is on the market and business taking the lead on things. Will such heavy reliance on that sector allow other sectors to participate in the regulation and management sphere. If the emphasis remains on this sector, how will this be possible where the private sector is not well developed? Does this open up opportunities for external input/domination and will this not undermine the development of local private sector?
- Para.10 (2nd one, pg. 8): While adopting at the national level, laws, rules and regulation that enforce the individual freedom and that punish all kinds of action, activity or behaviour that would represent an attempt to this individual freedom. (What does this mean?)

**Contributions on the Draft Action Plan (Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, of March 21st)**

1. Information and Communication infrastructure, financing and investment affordability, development, and sustainability:
  - Internet Exchange points within and between African countries should be promoted and implemented to increase the flow of local-to-local network traffic and decrease the international routing of traffic for local-to-local contact.
  - A solidarity fund should be established for African and developing countries for telecommunications infrastructures development.
  - Africa needs a Root server and a strong governments and (ISPs) support for the implementation of the Africa regional Internet Registry (AFRINIC) (as a non-profit organization) like the other existing RIRs.
  - Development on the African continental infrastructure should be equitable and not only on coastal or urban areas where natural

resources are exploited and multinational companies require advanced telecommunication systems.

- There is a need to develop Africa own dedicated communication infrastructure such as satellite system to foster regional integration, cut telecommunication costs, and make signal available for public use (RASCOM is seen as a temporary measure).
- Developed countries should not take advantage of buying spectrum from developing countries, which cuts against the principles of the global common and public resource.
- Voice Over IP is an important solution for communications and should be actively promoted as it reduces call costs.
- In developing infrastructures, ensure that the location, cost, accessibility and choice of technology is appropriate and relevant to communities. This has to, over the short term, include technologies that are appropriate to existing infrastructures.
- Integrate gender sensitivity into policies and initiatives for sustainable development should be gender-redistributive. The consideration of gender should be one of the building blocks in the conceptualization and development of policies, not an after thought or add on.

2. Access to information and knowledge:

- An increase in targeted aid from the developed economies of the world to the less developed, specifically targeting enabling resources to improve access to information at national levels including the basics such as electrification.
- ICT policy and decision making forums need to ensure Africa equitable representation and effective participation of all stakeholders, not just governments or private sector, but must include civil society organizations
- Rural access to renewable and affordable energy sources for electricity should be ensured.
- Call for the development of a digital solidarity fund to support infrastructure and capacity development in Africa.

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

- Governments of developing countries need to adopt a proactive role to promote and increase export growth and international trade. They need to ensure that the benefits of globalization and information

economy accrue to those trying to overcome economic marginalization due to geographic, financial, technological or educational handicaps.

- Ensure the participation of civil society, with particular emphasis on marginalized groups in the conceptualization, development and implementation and evaluation of initiatives.
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation of initiatives is carried out, as part of which gender disaggregated data should be collected.

4. Capacity Building: human resources development, education and training

- Capacity building must focus on basic education as well as an increased opportunities for life long learning, with particular emphasis in the development of a range of ICT skills, basic literacy, language and the ability to use information for the empowerment of individuals and communities (ie. information literacy).
- Capacity building should embrace building on existing capacities: include the needs of communities as expressed by them and the on going development of a pool of trained professionals in ICT and other relevant policy areas and regulatory matters.
- The nature of the African environment calls for a range of innovative training approaches, including distance learning and community based training.
- Capacity building must be done at an institutional level too including the networking of public institutions and communities, including schools, research centers and universities
- Programs should be developed on advocacy to capacitate people to argue their own case in Africa.
- A learning system that will ensure output of quality strategic leadership for Africa's entry into the information society should be created.
- Capacity building should be about empowering communities and groups and not simply about developing individuals.
- Skilled Africans in the Diaspora should be encouraged and enabled to participate in Africa's development through a range of clearly thought out programmes - eg. Volunteering, mentoring, secondments, contracts, etc.
- Across all areas of capacity building there is need to actively challenge gender bias in attitudes to women's and girls studying and using ICTs.



Gender awareness should be applied across the board in any programme related to ICT and education. Women should be given equal opportunities for obtaining training in the ICT field and in participating in the design of training materials.

5. Building Confidence and security in the use of ICTs

- Laws should be enacted that effectively place restrictions on privacy, anonymity, and encryption with a framework for enforcing legal rights, including, where available, the rights of access and rights to a remedy where a breach has occurred.
- Systems and rules must be in place facilitating the use of electronic forms of payment, in a legal framework ensuring that a online consumers have a recourse if the transaction does not go through or the goods or service purchased online are unsatisfactory.
- Online consumers must be assured that data they provide to online will not be misused.
- The standards for interception should be fully and clearly spelled out in legislation available to the public, with sufficient precision to protect against arbitrary application and so that citizens are aware of the circumstances and conditions under which public authorities are empowered to carry out such surveillance and interception.
- Legislation for counterchecking on cyber-crimes should not impose design mandates, technical standards, or data retention requirements on service provision, which could further hamper ICT use and service delivery in developing countries in Africa.
- Governments should actively promote user education and awareness about online privacy and the means of protecting privacy.

6. Enabling environment

- Developed countries markets should promote and facilitate the inclusion of developing countries in Africa to the broadband networks and their use of extranet/intranet applications in support of global economy which would help narrow the gap for African traders to enter and participate effectively in the global information economy.
- ICT policy at national level should be developed to ensure that the legal and institutional frameworks are enabling.
- Infrastructure and data systems should also be developed to ensure that nations are ready for transparent e-governance.

- Effective communication can be achieved through an enabling information environment that is characterized by:
  - policy guidelines
  - legislation
  - well defined strategy
  - telecommunications deregulation in the interest of universal access
  - reliable, scalable and efficient network infrastructure
  - human resource development in the area of ICT
  - knowledge management
  - affordable access to information
  - a natural way for collaboration and conversation
  - seamless integration of services and networks
  - universal access
  - security within the framework of freedom of expression
  
- New technologies are usually easily available to those who can afford them, therefore infrastructure development should focus heavily on pro-poor initiatives.

#### 7. ICT applications

- The application of ICTs to traditional industries such as agriculture and fisheries could result in important efficiency gains through improved access to market information and to existing and new markets. Access to better information on farming and fishing methods, models to optimise yields, and meteorological information to determine planting cycles, could also be used to good effect.
  
- ICT applications for health, documentation of indigenous health knowledge and skills, and multimedia to update skills of health workers in rural areas need to be supported and developed.
  
- ICTs for good governance should be promoted, especially in, secure voting procedures from remote polling stations, transparent public finance management, decentralization of administrative systems and greater co-operation between public and private sectors.
  
- In the face of rapidly changing technological advancement, and the exorbitant cost of proprietary hardware and software solutions, which discriminate against Africa in attempting to participate in ICTs for development, open source solutions have emerged as viable, cost effective and sustainable option for Africa's participation in ICTs for development and should be promoted by Africa and the international community.

#### 8. Cultural identity and linguistic diversity, local content and media development.

- African content producers need support in accessing production; distribution and investment facilities to enable them participate in global content markets.
- There should be communication mechanism between national governments, traditional authority systems in rural communities and civil society.
- Multi-media including community media as tools for documentation and development of Africa's rural heritage should be promoted.
- ICT initiatives should be relevant to local context, building on existing local oral knowledge and communication skills.
- Integration of community medias to the Internet should be ensured to facilitate use of local languages on the Internet.
- Partnerships involving civil society / media organizations should be developed as well as training programs in co-operation with private sector.
- African languages should be promoted in order to avoid exclusion and to strengthen unity and recognition around the world.
- The Information Society should ensure that the intellectual property rights of the poor and indigenous populations are protected from exploitation. It should also enable them to gain information and knowledge and profit from their own knowledge. Regulatory frameworks should include rights and obligations.
- Gender-aware language should be used across the board.

#### 9. Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society:

- Information Society should aim to be the conduit for encouraging learning, exchange of information and knowledge and mutual understanding and respect.

#### 10. International and Regional Cooperation:

- Development co-operation between developing and developed countries must be ensured for genuine capacity and infrastructure development and not about increased trade which favours already advantaged nations and does little to develop African based, owned and managed solutions.

- An accelerated development plan, that incorporates social, cultural and environmental impact assessments, is required to build infrastructure and human and institutional capacity.
- There is need to encourage South to South sharing of good practice with regards to investment, research and development, innovation and strategies.

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***Specific comments to the Draft Action Plan (Document WSIS/PCIP/DT/2-E, March 21st)***

**Section A:**

- para. 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, [employment,] education, health and access to knowledge.
- para.12: Individuals, organizations [and communities] should benefit from enhanced access to knowledge and information.
- para. 17 (point 3): Civil society, including NGOs, should work closely with communities [and the other sectors] in strengthening ICT-related initiatives.
- para. 22 (point 2): "Women should be given equal opportunities for obtaining training in the ICT field." The original sentence above is weak maybe something like "Women should be [encouraged and enabled to access education and] training in the ICT field, [through changing of existing structures that hinder this. Further, attention should be given to any basic literacy, language and information literacy needs.]
- para. 23: There should be a sentence about [Ensuring that women are able to further develop their skills to participate in the development of training, are involved in decision-making and contribute to technological change at all levels.]

Ends

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**Endorsements:**

- Alice Munyua of FEMNET
- Tracey Naughton of MISA
- Mr Mustapha Masmoudi of Association Tunisienne de la Communication
- Dianna Mercorios of Abantu for Development
- Dr. Habib Sy of Aid Transparency
- John Dada of Fantsuam Foundation
- Natasha Primo of Womensnet
- Ken Lohento of Oridev and Information - Communication et développement en Afrique
- Emmanuel Njenga of the Association for Progressive Communications
- George Christensen – AMARC / Radio 1 Gambia
- Modeste Mutinga – President Organisation des Medias d’Afrique Central, DRC
- Abdul Hafaem Ajijon, The Presidency, Nigeria
- Mawuko Zormelo, NCS, PMB, Ghana
- Francis Egbolchare, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- Mkpe Abang, IT Telecom Digest, Nigeria
- Remmy Nweke, Champion Newspapers, Nigeria
- ‘Gebenga Sesan, African Youth Initiative and Paradigm Initiative, Nigeria
- Leopold Armah, African Youth Initiative, Ghana
- Kay Raseroka, International Federation of Library Associations, Botswana
- Cyprian Ndikumana, Maison de la Presse du Burundi, Burundi
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