Response and Comments from Child Helpline International (CHI)to WSIS Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action plan

August 2003

Child Helpline International (CHI) is an international non-governmental organisation comprising representation from 52 child helplines. In response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, CHI is a network that exists to promote child protection across the world through facilitation and initiation of child helplines. It attaches great importance to the adaptation of technology and works towards cross-sectoral partnerships to increase access to information and access to services for marginalised children.

General Comments

Child Helpline International (CHI) is committed to creating access to information and services for the marginalised. In developing nations where state mechanisms are unable to reach children in crisis, it has been the experience that helplines provide an efficient link between children and the system. CHI actively works towards adaptation of technology to ensure easy access to information and hence recognises and actively supports the role of ICT's in bridging divides that exist in society.

Recommendations of CHI to the Draft Declaration of Principles

1. **It needs to be made mandatory for all nations to have toll-free child helplines supported by the Government**

Child helplines are defined as mechanisms such as telephones, email, chat rooms, radio, broad band, letters, telegrams, post-cards etc. to reach out to vulnerable groups of children in their moments of need. Child helplines exist to give children a platform to express their need for help and provide them with necessary assistance, guidance and options to ensure their well-being and rehabilitation. Child helplines function as links between children and the system. Ratification of the United Convention of the Rights of the Child makes it mandatory for Governments to ensure the protection of children's rights. Hence Governments should support helplines and their recognition of helplines as independent agencies needs to be made mandatory.

This implies that we want the principle agreed as an important, minimum level of protection for children. We expect the UN and the private sector to support Governments so that more such helplines may be able to be set up, and we are hoping that the International Committee of the Red Cross, and its partners, will also take this up as a point for their regular monitoring.

2. **To protect children from being exploited through ICT's by ensuring that necessary laws, policies and regulations are set in place**

   Children and young adults across the world, especially in developing nations, are vulnerable to pornography, paedophilia, and trafficking for sexual exploitation. CHI cautions against abusive use of ICT's to exploit children and urges that regulatory mechanisms in the form of law and policies be set in place to prevent the abuse of children and to prosecute offenders. CHI recommends that it be made mandatory for all nations to adhere to regulatory mechanisms.

   This implies duties and responsibilities of protection combined with commitment to access without resorting to the 'easiest' solution of prohibiting access. This also implies 'cross border/space' cooperation and sharing of information/experience, etc.

3. **To ensure children's access to helplines and ICT's**

   CHI recommends that through the use of ICT's children across the world, especially those in developing nations, can gain access to ICT's and to helplines. It would involve making it mandatory for nations to ensure the following:

   - Installation of public telephones in all public places

- Installation of public telephones in all facilities for children

- Installation of public internet kiosks

- Installation of HAM/broadband radios

- Providing a free post box for children's helplines

This recognises the practical steps needed for children to have open access to the technology needed for helplines, but also that there are other forms of ICTs that are important for children to obtain information e.g. radios. This is extremely important for developing countries

4. Providing a voice for children

In recognition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, CHI urges that children be seen as individuals with potential and as the future workforce of nations. Hence, it is their right to have access to information and services that exist for their well-being, protection and development. CHI recommends that it be mandatory for nations to make children's participation integral to decision making and to feedback of the functioning of helplines.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHI TO THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
(Document WSIS03/PC-3/2-E of 18 July 2003

In view of the foregoing and considering further that the word "**children**" has only been been included once in the **Draft Declaration of Principles**,

[**14.** Full participation, empowerment and social inclusion are fundamental characteristics and objectives of the Information Society. Accordingly, particular attention must be paid to marginalized and vulnerable groups, including: migrants and refugees, as well as other communities, unemployed and underprivileged people, **children,** the elderly, the disabled, indigenous peoples, minorities, and those living in rural and remote areas.]
CHI recommends the following modifications:

Please reword to include children. See proposed addition of last sentence.**7-8** The Information Society should harness the power of ICTs to advance human development. We seek to build an Information Society that is inclusive, where all persons, without distinction of any kind, exercise their right to freedom of expression and their access to and use of [reliable] information [and a plurality of opinions, as well as access to a wide range of content, including material reflecting national and regional cultures and content relevant to local communities[1]], in order to create, receive, accumulate, disseminate, share and utilize information and knowledge, in any media and regardless of frontiers, through intensive use of ICTs and in accordance with the legal system of

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[1] Text proposed by observers/UNESCO.

each country, at the service of humankind, in order to contribute to its economic, social, cultural and political development. In this context we should mainstream a gender perspective at all levels of actions and use ICTs as a tool to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Furthermore, ICTs should be used as a tool to mainstream the rights and empowerment of children.

See proposed additional bullet point.

[[**10**.   The essential requirements for the development of an equitable information society include:
-   A well-developed and affordable infrastructure;
-   Confidence and security in using ICTs;
-   Adequate development of capacity building;
-   The respect for internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms;
-   Cultural and linguistic diversity;
-   International cooperation and respect of international law;
-   An enabling environment;
-   Partnership among all stakeholders;
-   Protection of vulnerable groups;
-   Mainstreaming of a gender perspective;
-   Measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises;
-   Accessibility of technology to children.**]**

See proposed additional bullet point.
C. An information Society for all: key principles
12.   The Information Society must serve the interests of all nations and all the people of the world, in a manner that secures their fair, balanced and harmonious development. Most particularly, special attention must be paid to [developing countries]:
-   [people living in rural and remote areas who constitute the majority of the population in many developing countries;
-   the interests of developing and least developed countries (LDCs), highly indebted poor countries (HIPCs), economies in transition and post-conflict countries**;**
-       the challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS), landlocked countries, countries with extremely difficult topography and those with unique geographic features;-   the demographic diversity of nations and regions;marginalized groups, especially children.

Please include children. See second line after "men and women".

15.   More attention must be given to overcoming the constraints that have contributed to differential access and participation for men and women, and children. In building the Information Society, special efforts should be made through facilitating increased access to, and use of, ICTs by women so that they are able to participate early and fully[2] in the political, economic and social life and development of their countries.]

See proposed inclusion of reference to institutions for children.

[**19.**   Governments should develop and implement pro-active policies in order to ensure Universal Access. The extent of such a national public service, including Universal Access, should be defined and implemented transparently and in cooperation with private sector and civil society, taking into account every country's specific circumstances. Universal Access in disadvantaged regions could be financed by a national [solidarity] fund, fed by the telecom operators acting in the

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[2] Text incorporating elements proposed by observers/UN ECOSOC-DAW.

national market. Any such policy should not infringe on the principles of free competition and of non-discrimination and should attract private investment in the emerging markets. In disadvantaged areas, public community access points, such as post offices, libraries, schools, institutions for children, etc., can provide effective means for ensuring Universal Access.]

Please reword by order of importance and to include paedophilia and trafficking.
44B
• Illicit content: most promotes scams, pornography, paedophilia, trafficking, illegal online gambling services, medical cures, get rich quick schemes or misleading and deceptive trade practices.

Under 8. Cultural diversity …,
49. Cultural heritage is the bridge between our past and our future. The preservation of cultural heritage is a crucial component of identity and self-understanding that links a community to its past. The information society should harness and integrate cultural heritage for the future by digitalisation of the cultural inventories in archives and libraries. The shared heritage includes the public domain of cultural information, especially of writings, speech, images and music. Through access to information, the Information Society should promote coexistence by breaking stereotypes in relation to gender, class, race, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHI TO THE DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION (Document WSIS03/PC-3/3-E of 22 August 2003

Insert a new bullet point between a) and b)
9. At a global level, the following **indicative targets** could serve as benchmarks for actions to be taken for improving access to, and use of, ICTs. They could also be used for developing more specific targets in national e-strategies:

a) All villages to be connected by 2010, with a community access point by 2015.

b) All children in need of care and protection to have access to telephones, radio and other ICTs by 2010.

c) 90 per cent of the world's population to be within wireless coverage by 2010 and 100 per cent by 2015.

Please add a new point after c)
14. In order to overcome the obstacles, which are often created by new technologies, and to ensure the **inclusion of vulnerable groups** in the Information Society, the following actions are envisaged:

c) Designate, by 2005, a top-level delegate in national governing/regulation bodies for telecommunication and information technology, to be assigned to maintain regular contact with the organizations of the disabled, especially with organizations of the deaf and the blind, and to make sure that the special requirements for the disabled are recognized and implemented in national laws and regulations.	N
c)bis) *Designate, by 2004, a top-level delegate in national governing/regulation bodies for telecommunication and information technology, to be assigned to provide resources and maintain regular contact with the organizations of children and to make sure that the special requirements for children are recognized and implemented in national laws and*	

regulations.	

Amend 19.d) to include children.

d) Design special programmes using ICTs to increase knowledge of ICT among girls and women, and children in general, and to remove the gender barriers (including unequal access to education). *Awareness-raising programmes should be developed to sensitize decision-makers and policy-makers on this issue, as well as teacher training courses for implementation. Early intervention programmes in science and technology should target young girls to increase the number of women in ICT careers.*	

Amend 19.f) to include Helplines.

f) *Launch pilot projects to design new forms of ICT-based networking, in particular education and research networks linking developed and developing countries, and networks between teachers and teachers' institutions, as well as helplines.*	N

Under 7. **ICT Applications, please ADD:**

E-child

Actions:

a) *Ensure that all children have access to telephones and appropriate technology to protect themselves in abusive / harsh circumstances.*

b) *Ensure that necessary laws are in play by 2005 to protect children from being exploited through ICT's.*

c) *Provide a safe environment for all children to express themselves, especially when in need / crisis.*