

Final Report from the Meeting

1. Within the framework of the Cluster of WSIS Related Events taking place from 14 to 25 May 2007 in Geneva the ITU and UNDP convened the Joint Facilitation Meeting on the Action Lines C2, C4, and C6. The meeting took place on 16 May 2007 at the ITU Headquarters. The goal of this joint meeting was to report on developments, identify priority issues and facilitate information sharing in the context of the action lines while looking for synergies between the action lines. Mr. Emamgholi Behdad, ITU, and Radhika Lal, UNDP chaired the meeting. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary-General of ITU, and Ms. Odile Sorgho-Moulinier, Director UNDP Geneva, delivered the opening address.

2. Approximately 80 representatives from governments, international organizations, private sector and civil society were present at the meeting. In order to enable a broader participation the meeting was web-cast live. All meeting documents, web-cast material as well as list of participants are available at the WSIS Implementation [web page](#)¹.

Action Line C2: Information and Communication Infrastructure

3. During the session on the Action Line C2 nine documents were presented. The ITU reported on the activities directly related to the facilitation of the Action Line C2 undertaken since last year's meeting. The attention of the participants was drawn into the new virtual working space², launched for the purposes of the facilitation activities. In the following series of the contributions, the ITU staff drew the attention to a number of other actions including, National Reports on WSIS Implementation, WSIS Stocktaking Exercise, World Information Society Report 2007, Measuring the Information Society 2007, Connect the World.

¹ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/c2/index.html#16-May-2007>

² <http://www.itu.int/wsis/c2/>

4. Moreover, the NEPAD and IWTGC presented activities they are carrying out in Africa described in two following documents NEPAD e-Africa Commission's submission to the Joint Facilitation Meeting on WSIS Action Lines C2, C4, & C6, and Infinity West Africa Fiber Optic Project. Finally Association for Progressive Communication introduced the document including observations on the facilitation process and possible suggestions on themes that might be explored through multi-stakeholder discussion and interaction.

5. In response to the presented material and the chairman's invitation to the open discussion on future actions the following remarks have been received from the various delegates.

- Financing is a crucial issue for any networking projects in Africa. The telecommunication infrastructure debate should be discussed in broader approach addressing network industries. It was underlined that without energy sources ICT's are insignificant. There is a strong need for energy sources to feed network infrastructure and the nodes. There is a need for methodology and synergy between infrastructures and implementations.
- There exists a need to have dialogue around financing infrastructure. This forum should be used to bring together people with expertise in infrastructure-development, financing etc. so as to have expert recommendations around those issues. Questions around the economics of infrastructure, e.g. what should be the financial mechanisms involved?, are highly relevant for this group. Comparative case studies need to be carried out to discuss the implications of private vs. public finance.
- There is a need for stakeholders and investors to join forces and share the costs of setting up equipment and infrastructure so that the recovery of price of equipment could be less. However, this might be considered anti-competitive, so legal frameworks need to be looked into.
- In many developing countries there are perfectly viable infrastructure activities that should be harnesses to their full capacity and potential before development of another layer of infrastructure.
- In rural areas the technological possibilities of wireless networks should be considered. Community infrastructure should be laid down to assist local organizations in enabling sharing access and bringing down bandwidth costs.
- In developing countries, infrastructure needs to be developed so as to extend over isolated populations and connect rural areas.
- There lies a need for open access approaches to facilitate non-discriminatory access to core infrastructure particularly at the regional level, as constructing competing communications infrastructure may not always be economically favorable.
- There is a need for action aiming reduction of overlaps in infrastructure related projects carried out in the regions. It could be better to undertake larger projects rather than have multiple redundant small projects.
- Governments need to set policies and regulations that enable private investors to compete in an open market. The ITU³ takes numerous actions aiming harmonization of the policies and laws in African countries.

³ ITU Secretariat

- There exists a need for good design of Satellite Networks to connect schools via VSAT. This drew attention to the existing efforts undertaken by AFROSAT.
- There lies an immediate need to kick-start capacity building to attain critical mass. However, the capacity building is not just training. These activities need to encourage not only investment, but also to bring down prices.
- The potential of the action-line process lies in bringing interested parties to discuss policy issues and the challenges represented by the future.
- The action-line community needs to address and clearly define the purpose of the meetings and formulate strategies on how to maximize their utility. There lies a need to make the meetings genuinely constructive and have a concrete outcome. It should not be reporting exercise. Engagement of the participants from different action line groups would be with advantage for the overall outcome.
- There is a need to have people interested in same issues to get together. Special interest groups should be formed or sub-themes should be identified in order to aid the facilitation of the meetings.
- There is a possibility to utilize the materials available at the International Chamber of Commerce to aid enabling environment issues. The list of available toolkits includes liberalization policy toolkit, competition policy toolkit and sector specific case studies.
- There lies a gap in the understanding between the ICT community and development community. It might be useful to develop a toolkit (based on data sets, information communication flows and strategy design development issues) to help bring greater understanding of ICT's, their potentials and their limitations. This can also help reduce the paradigm gap.

6. Finally the chairman requested the gathering for comments on a proposed Plan of Action directed towards six fields as follows:

- a. Promotion of National ICT-Strategies
- b. Harmonization of the ICT Policies in the different regions
- c. Development of regional and large-scale national initiatives
- d. Launch of global thematic ICT Infrastructure initiatives for:
 - i. "Public Access"
 - ii. "ICT-Applications for Development"
 - iii. "Broadband Connectivity through the Wired and Wireless Technologies"
 - iv. "Large-scale ICT backbones"
- e. Development of a virtual financing platform
- f. Deployment of an online tool for ICT Development Assessment

7. In response Ghana requested for clarification on whether the Harmonization of the ICT Policies in the different regions would address issues of regulation as well. Tunisia in general expressed no objections to the proposal and requested for clarification of three points, i.e. b), c) and e). The World Bank expressed no objections to the proposal. The World Bank representative drew attention to the fact that the item focusing on the Harmonization of the ICT Policies is very related to the Action Line C6: Enabling Environment. France drew attention that this is re-clustering the themes with the infrastructure orientation. Representative of International Foundation for the Children of the World requested for considering changes in third item of the Plan of Action that might read Development of

International, Regional and Large Scale National Initiatives. CSDPTT⁴, the French NGO, expressed need for focus on the extension of the network infrastructure in rural areas and isolated populations in developing countries.

8. The issue of what was the most appropriate function of these meetings – reporting and information sharing and/or focusing on selected themes (e.g. open access and financing of infrastructure) in terms of the discussion and potential for joint work was raised by APC. The need to ensure enough time for open discussion of critical issues was also raised by other civil society organizations. The discussion on this issue was not resolved and was carried over into the next session.

Action Line C6: Enabling Environment

9. The chair launched the discussion by proposing that the meeting:

- Keep formal reporting to a minimum to facilitate discussion of priority themes
- Identify a few themes within the broad area of enabling policy for information sharing, discussion and identification of partnerships opportunities/synergies. The ones proposed for this year included:
 - (i) Facilitating affordable access with a focus on regulatory frameworks in particular the ITU-Infodev ICT toolkit module on universal access;
 - (ii) Mainstreaming of ICT in national development/poverty reduction strategies.
- Explore the best use of the action-line meetings and a way forward

10. The meeting started with the presentation of a few reports. The focus then shifted to a discussion on the agenda item on enabling environment relating to access. An ITU representative from its Regulatory and Market Environment Division highlighted trends in access, provided a snapshot of effectiveness of current universal access and shared information on the upcoming module on Universal access that is being led by ITU for the Infodev-ITU *ICT Regulation Toolkit* with a view to encouraging participants to share any promising experiences and innovative models for extending universal access.

11. This elicited interest from the ICC and BASIS representative and BASIS member who pointed to resources that have been developed by the private sector and which might be of interest and could be shared in this context. Ms. Roseman announced that a Public and Private Partnership Forum (PPPF-2007) organized by the Telecommunications Bureau (BDT) and the African Working Group on private sector issues will be held in Nairobi immediately prior to the AFTRA meeting.

12. It also elicited interest from the Special Envoy from France who pointed to the potential of shared infrastructure models especially in zones that are on the edge of viability. Due to limits of the buying power of people in these specific zones, cost recovery is an issue but it can be addressed by different actors joining forces and sharing equipment to recover costs and provide attractive tariffs. The issue also attracted the interest of a civil society organization and from UNDP. The Chair pointed to community-driven networks which provide a new business development

⁴ Coopération Solidarité Développement aux PTT

model where viability is enhanced in part by sharing bandwidth costs and finding ways to leveraging backhaul networks through open access and shared infrastructure strategies. APC proposed looking further at open access models

13. Related to this area of interest, ITU shared information on an upcoming Forum on Telecommunication Regulation in Africa (FTRA-2007) with a focus on "Infrastructure Sharing" that will be held in Nairobi, Kenya 6 – 7 June 2007.

14. NEPAD reported on the enabling environment part of the e-Africa Commission's submission. The delegate highlighted that they are experienced with working in a multi-stakeholder environment bringing government, private sector and civil society together. In East Africa, this resulted with the adoption of the Kigali protocol that provides a legal framework for 23 eastern Africa countries. Of which 12 have ratified the protocol. The others shall do so in the next 6 weeks. The network will be developed within the context of this framework, a group of government experts will manage the legal framework and a special group will operate the network. Signatory countries will have to harmonize their laws in accordance with the protocol. They will now expand to West Africa with the support of the French Development Agency.

15. On the issue of ICT in poverty reduction, Mr Souter indicated on behalf of APC that there is a *paradigm gap* between the ICT community and development communities which needs to be addressed if ICTs are to be deployed more effectively in development contexts. At present there is a very poor level of integration in strategic design processes at the different levels in most countries which is why APC is working on developing a toolkit to facilitate dialogue, identify fruitful approaches and some of the limitations of current mainstreaming efforts.

16. The discussion of the work of the action-line teams was opened up with the decision taken to continue the discussion in the following session after lunch.

Action Line C4: Capacity development

Approaches to capacity building

17. The Chair opened the discussion by noting that capacity building is not just a question of training initiatives and that it would be useful in this context to identify issues and approaches for effective capacity development. She also pointed to the capacity building role of WSIS and meetings like this which could help in building a shared understanding of critical emerging issues and approaches like 'open access' which had acquired importance because in spite of investment in regional infrastructure, prices remained high and there was a need to explore innovative approaches to making such infrastructure accessible and affordable. She pointed to some of the areas of focus that had come up during the discussions such as open access, new models for enhancing universal access and peer-to-peer models of capacity development and inquired if there was interest from the group in working on these issues and addressing them in the next facilitation meeting.

18. It was pointed out by an NGO that peer-to-peer mentoring is essential amongst professionals and youth of developing nations in order to aid capacity building and knowledge transfer.

19. The representative from France pointed out that on capacity building, in many cases, vocabulary and familiarizing people with particular expressions is a huge part of capacity building effort. For example, WSIS brought visibility to many terms such as e-governance.

20. The World Bank mentioned that critical challenges to capacity building lie in the field of regulation. It agreed with the approach of peer-to-peer capacity building and pointed to such an approach being adopted in the context of its work with regulators in collaboration with ITU. It was only through a process of continuous sharing of best practices, innovations and emerging solutions to respond to new regulatory challenges that there could be sustainable capacity development as opposed to the case of limited and stand-alone trainings. It pointed to the increase in collaboration with ITU, both through InfoDev and the World Bank in this area.

21. Argentina commented that capacity building, and not a regulatory framework, is a top priority for developing countries. There is a need to discuss regional projects on the table that concur with the general strategies of the ITU, putting in place the discussions from Tunisia and Geneva.

22. A representative from an NGO commented that capacity building is the key to enabling progress in developing countries. There also needs to be created a set of best practice documents for regulators and ISP's, so as to address the problems of resource shortage. Mr Hugo Lueders (e-SCC Brussels) spoke about importance of having good model and set of "best practices" to foster the international cooperation.

23. In developing countries, capacity building should take place in institutions of higher learning and universities. There is a need to encourage these institutions of higher learning by providing them with a critical mass of resources to keep up with the progress being made.

24. In terms of issues to be addressed, it was pointed out that energy sources in developing and the lack of actual computing resources is a problem that needs to be resolved.

25. The representative from Ghana commented that there is a need for sector specific policies, so as to implement ICT strategies. Need for countries to build skills and businesses, so as to be able to implement all the action lines. Holistic approach to capacity building is essential.

26. An Indian NGO gave the example of the "hole in the wall project" in India and pointed out that traditional types of training might not always be necessary. First, it is more important to get access out there rather than worry about training.

Discussion of the way forward on these action-lines

27. In the context of the discussion of the way forward on the work of the action-line meetings, Gabon indicated that the focus should be on the deliverables (acuity) for developing countries and that we should act concretely and have a concise action plan that could be progressively updated.

28. Finland asked how the virtual working space could help in information sharing and the work of the action-lines. Further discussion concluded that the Virtual space looks quite promising. ITU indicated that stakeholders could use the open

environment to post documents and projects. This will be significantly expanded with time. This is a preliminary test.

29. In the context of what could be done in the context of the action-lines and the related meetings, the Chair pointed out that given the fact that there are no additional resources available for this work limited the degree and type of action-oriented work that could be accomplished. The ways to contribute to direct action could take the form of information sharing on areas of shared concern and work, identification of priority issues and potentially for the development of joint project activities and our own capacity development on emerging issues. This was not the place for direct action. This is the problem.

30. Tunisia agreed and noted that this is not the place to take action. They are concerned with the WSIS action lines. He noted that we have facilitators but what was their role in the context of their own agencies and initiatives. The participants in these meetings could share experiences, information and initiatives but action should be taken by facilitators and stakeholders outside of this space.

31. ITU commented that through the WSIS Stocktaking Exercise that is being carried out, virtual groups could come together to assist each other in identifying challenges and avoiding them in future. There is also a need on aggregating and coordinating the advice to different countries. It also pointed to the role of virtual working space that could function as a vehicle to carry on discussions after the meetings. ITU mentioned that currently such an online forum exists and that it will be significantly extended over time.

32. There is a need to engage people to look forward to the meetings and motivate them to take action. It is necessary to define the purpose of the meetings and be coherent regarding what is expected of them. A representative from France commented that these meetings should facilitate an environment for improved networking, where everyone should have the opportunity to meet everyone else. It is proposed that next year there shall be workshops held for interested groups and networking events around certain themes (Such as regulatory issues, workforce development, etc.) shall be organized. While doing so, the diverse regional interests could be kept in mind.

33. It was also pointed out that there is a necessity to work on all the action lines and take advantage of the progress being made in all of them individually. Action lines C4 and C6 specifically need smaller themes.

Presentation of documents and sharing

34. In addition to the discussions, the following presentations were made –
- The ITU/BDT presented its work on human capacity building drawing attention to its approach on delivery system, for example networks of regional and local experts, ITU e-Learning Centre and specific projects such as the Center of Excellence, the Internet Training Centers Initiative and the Tap on Telecom Network initiatives undertaken in this domain.
 - NEPAD presented its e-Schools initiatives aimed at imparting ICT skills to young Africans, training teachers to use ICTs to enhance teaching, and to facilitate the management of schools through ICTs . The e-Schools will also be used to promote health literacy. 600,000 primary and secondary schools in Africa will be involved in this initiative. Other objectives

include making use of e-learning techniques and encouraging private sector partnerships. Their long-term plan is to encourage in-country partnerships to aid development in the region. The ITU's role has been to develop a framework for training teachers in ICTs.

Round Table

35. Representative of the UNCTAD drew the participants attention to the requirements of the Commission for Science and Technology Development (CSTD) in its implementation progress. He raised an important point focusing on the potential contribution and role of facilitators in information collection on progress on the action lines (at the national level) that could assist the CSTD in its work.

36. Towards the end of the meeting there was consensus on the following issues

- Extending the set of virtual working methods to assist the participants of the action line groups;
- Clustering is needed within the action lines;
- At the beginning of the next meeting a brief orientation shall be held to bring everyone up to date about the various issues;
- Shared infrastructure should be explored so as to make best use of available resources and greater emphasis on open and universal access.

37. In regards to the Action Line C2, the Chairperson from ITU concluded that the ITU would continue activities targeted at facilitating development on information and communication infrastructure. The general understanding from the comments is that there was no objection against proposed Plan of Action, however all participants are invited to submit comments and remarks to the draft meeting report. It was stressed that the ITU will work towards extending the virtual working methods. The functionality of the launched virtual working space would be extended with time. The ITU is going to continue identifying infrastructure related projects and provide necessary information with the aim of encouraging possible partnerships.

38. Regarding the next physical meeting it was suggested that there is a need for a full day event focusing on Action Line C2. As an executing agency, broadband connectivity in Africa is a major priority for the ITU. In terms of the infrastructure development the ITU's primary role is to promote coordination between stakeholders in order to effectively carry out the aims of the WSIS.

39. Regarding the Action Lines C4 and C6 the Chairperson concluded that the meeting drew attention to the existing interlinks between all discussed action lines. Nevertheless the approach of the Action Line C4 and C6 goes beyond the infrastructure related issues and it is necessary to agree on priority themes that could be focused on which would be of interest, facilitate joint work and build our shared understanding of emerging issues and innovative solutions. It was suggested that further discussions on this could be continued in a virtual environment. The next physical meeting should be held in one-year time and it shall be full day event. There would also be guidance and suggestions on the way forward from the meeting of action-line facilitators to be held on Friday May 25, 2007.