

27 March 2003

WSIS- Civil Society Subcommittee on Content and Themes (WSIS-SCT)

Final Report on Prepcom-2 Activities of the Civil Society on Content and Themes

Background and Prehistory

The Civil Society Subcommittee on Content and Themes (WSIS-SCT) was initiated with the approval of the Civil Society Plenary (CSP) at Prepcom-1 to perform a function parallel to that of the Inter-Governmental Subcommittee 2 on Content and Themes.

Sally Burch and William McIver volunteered at Prepcom-1 to serve as coordinators of WSIS-SCT.

WSIS-SCT maintains an e-mail list for its work. This list is open. Any CS participant can ask to subscribe (at mciver@albany.edu).

WSIS-SCT has always been open to Civil Society (CS) participants. It has always attempted to operate in a transparent way, through publication, wide dissemination, and reflection on documents; open meetings at the Prepcoms; and discussion of proposed activities and work on its e-mail list.

During the intersessional period, the working group produced two content proposals, one for the September 16 informal meeting, entitled *STATEMENT ON WSIS CONTENT, THEMES and OUTCOMES: Input to the Informal Meeting on Content & Themes 16 – 18 September 2002* and a more complete proposal, entitled "Civil Society Statement to Prepcom 2 on Vision, Principles, Themes and Process for WSIS", following on a broad consultation with civil society organizations, that was sent to the secretariat and bureau chair, before the December 25 deadline.

Chronology of Prepcom-2 Activities

Meetings of the WSIS-SCT and/or its drafting group were held daily during Prepcom-2, as of the 4th day.

20 February 2003

The WSIS-SCT organized itself into drafting, monitoring, and lobbying groups. One group also volunteered to facilitate the posting of the WSIS-SCT documents on the Web. A contact was also designated for the submission of input via e-mail. We discussed the role of the committee and there was general consensus that the group should facilitate the drafting of substance provided by the CS entities (e.g. Caucuses).

The drafting group also focused on the question of which document would be the basis for the Inter-governmental drafting of the WSIS declaration. In particular, the idea of responding to the Samasekou non paper or the regional compilation document, taking into account the CS statement to Prepcom-1.

Caucuses were asked by the drafting group to provide input documents by 21 February in the morning, which would be used to draft a position statement. The drafting group discussed the structure for the CS document. It was decided that we must wait for the structure to be defined by the Inter-Governmental drafting group.

WSIS-SCT was also involved with the CS Plenary and the CS Secretariat in requesting opportunities for more direct and official input into the Inter-governmental drafting process and speaking slots.

21 February 2003

WSIS-SCT produced a one page document: "Vision and Principles of Information and Communication Societies," which represented a summary of the document produced in December plus some of the inputs requested the day before. It presented a set of visions, principles, and key themes. This document was also distributed physically, by e-mail, and posted on the Web.

It was decided that the WSIS-SCT would meet every morning at 10:00 in room 16 of the CICG.

24 February 2003

At the WSIS-SCT meeting, it was agreed to give priority speaking slots to content groups addressing issues identified as CS priorities and those whose issues have been excluded from the Inter-governmental drafts.

Work on this day was focused on producing a document by the end of the day. Endorsements of the document were also to be sought. The drafting group convened at 15:00 to organize the themes and produce a document.

A number of individuals played critical roles in relaying information about the Inter-governmental process and giving suggestions about how to prioritize the work of WSIS-SCT.

The WSIS-SCT coordinated the production of the document "Contribution on Common Vision, Key Principles, and List of Issues for the Declaration and the Action Plan Version 1. (Draft)," based on input by CS entities over the weekend and on Monday. This document was a response to the Inter-governmental draft current at that time covering the same issues. This document was also distributed physically, by e-mail, and posted on the Web.

At this time the drafting group decided that its document in progress should be split into separate major sections for release, mirroring the Inter-governmental process.

The group agreed to propose to the CS Bureau that a representative of the Content and Themes group should have a permanent presence at bureau meetings, with a voice on content-related matters.

25 February 2003

The WSIS-SCT continued to discuss and prioritize its work around the Inter-governmental drafts that were released or expected soon. The next document expected at this time was the themes section in the Action Plan part of the declaration.

For lobbying purposes, the WSIS-SCT produced and released a one-page document "Seven Musts": Priority Principles Proposed by Civil Society." It was also distributed physically and electronically.

The WSIS-SCT also released an initial version of the document "Contribution on Common Vision and Key Principles for the Declaration." This document reflected further elaboration on inputs given by CS entities. It was also distributed physically and electronically.

One of the Content and Themes group's coordinators summarized the proposals produced to date on the vision and principles at the Inter-governmental Subcommittee 2 session.

26 February 2003

The WSIS-SCT also released a new version of the document "Contribution on Common Vision and Key Principles for the Declaration." This document reflected corrections to the previous document, in particular

it attempted to reconcile differences with CS entities over the right to communicate. This was distributed physically and electronically.

Five Civil Society caucuses were scheduled to speak at the Inter-governmental morning plenary within a ten minute period. The collection of names for this input was coordinated by the WSIS-SCT on behalf of CS. A representative of the WSIS-SCT read the document "Seven Musts": Priority Principles Proposed by Civil Society" at the Inter-governmental morning plenary in which the Inter-governmental drafting group gave its report. In addition, representatives from the Internet Governance and Gender Caucuses spoke at the Inter-governmental morning plenary. Two of the five caucuses were not able to speak because the allotted time had expired.

Once the Inter-governmental draft Declaration had been received, the group worked on a response to that document with precise proposal for modifications and additions to the language of the document. This document was released under the title: "Comments of civil society on the draft declaration" (provisional version).

27 February 2003

The Inter-governmental draft Action Plan was received in the morning. The process of drafting was distributed to caucuses and other CS entities to propose specific language for the CS response to the Action Plan. The ultimate drafting process was the development of a document that did not comment directly on the Inter-governmental document, but which generally followed its structure and included only CS inputs to the Action Plan. This approach it was decided will allow the Inter-governmental drafting group to align the CS input with the structure of its document. Given time constraints, the resulting document is a compilation of proposals, which were not discussed by the whole group.

WSIS-SCT again coordinated with CS entities to select four speakers for this day in the Inter-governmental plenaries. Only two were given speaking slots, in the morning report back from the Inter-governmental drafting group. These were the environmental and the media caucuses.

WSIS-SCT representatives also met with the chair of the Inter-governmental drafting group to: explain the work of Civil Society in general and that of the WSIS-SCT, request adequate time to give input to the Action Plan, and to seek clarification on the intersession drafting process. The representatives felt that they were well received. Clarification on the intersession process, however, was not available at the time. It was indicated the government's bureau were to take up the issue that evening.

28 February 2003

The document "Plan of Action: Civil Society's Proposals", compiled the day before, was circulated to delegates and on-line. The proposal from the trade union group was annexed to the document, having been received too late to include. The trade union proposal was also read at the Plenary session. This document, together with corrected versions of some of the previous documents, were presented to the secretariat and chair of the Inter-governmental drafting committee, for inclusion as civil society contributions to the draft Declaration and Action Plan

The Content and Themes group presented a report to the Civil Society Plenary. It was agreed that the group would continue to function on-line during the next intersessional period and would work on a Declaration and Action Plan from a civil society perspective. A provisional list of regional, sector and thematic caucuses and their respective focal points was circulated. Each group was invited to name one or two delegates to the Content and Themes group, which is to set up a new list.

There were serious complaints concerning the precarious conditions in which the civil society content and themes group and drafting committee had to work: usually in English only, thus excluding the participation of delegates who do not speak that language; no permanent room or equipment to work with, despite having requested it two months earlier; last minute information as to what documents we would be reacting to and how our content would (or not) be received and whether it would be treated with any official status.

Considering these difficulties, the results (5 documents, plus the numerous caucus proposals) are a significant achievement.

The Trade Unions Caucus spoke in the Inter-governmental plenary session.

PostScript

Given the new May 30 deadline for comments on the next version of the draft declaration and action plan, this will no doubt be the first priority of the Content and Themes group over the coming two months.

A virtual Civil Society Plenary group has been established at plenary@wsis-cs.org following on the proposal submitted by Seán Ó Siochrú to the final Civil Society Plenary meeting of PrepCom-2. Under this plan, the WSIS-SCT will continue in its role to facilitate the formulation of Civil Society content for input into the Inter-governmental drafting process.

Appendix:

The documents produced to date by the Civil Society Content and Themes group can be found at the following locations:

<http://www.worldsummit2003.de><http://www.wsis.info>

<http://Article19.net/WSIS/SCT>

<http://www.itu.int/wsis>

<http://www.geneva2003.org>

The contacts for the Content and Themes group are:

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