

Asia-Pacific Civil Society Caucus Statement to the Intersessional Meeting of the World Summit on Information Society
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Thank you very much and good afternoon Madame Chairperson, delegates and officials of the WSIS.

The Asia-Pacific Caucus endorses the Civil Societies Priority Document that underscores key issues around sustainable democratic development, human rights, global knowledge commons, literacy, education and research, cultural and linguistic diversity, information security issues, access and infrastructure issues, disability and particularly gender equality and women's empowerment.

Particular to our region we would like to emphasise the principles of inclusivity, the right to information, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Emerging concerns such as information security on the Internet should not in any way infringe on people's privacy and right to communicate freely using ICT. We recognize individual agency in accessing information and knowledge for their own development. We therefore oppose actions that regulate content and communication and in anyway and undermine the free flow of information.

We also recognise that there are many different political environments within the region that are not conducive to civil society's participation in policy making and programme development in the area of ICT. The principle of national sovereignty should be extended to include not just governments but reflect the true sovereignty of the people (comment from the Czech Republic, footnote 25, p. 7).

We are concerned over the fact that national ICT policies, programmes, and plans in the Asia-Pacific region do not address gender and ICT concerns. We support the Canadian government's submission that a gender dimension should be integrated in ICT policies and programmes to ensure that women and men equally benefit from ICT (para 11-a p. 8). We urge our governments to integrate a gender dimension in all discussion spaces on gender and ICT issues.

Thank you very much for your attention.