

WSIS+10 High-Level Event, Geneva, 10-13 June 2014
Written Policy Statement Germany, Mr. Günter Nooke

Germany would like to thank all stakeholders involved during the past 10 years of the World Summit on the Information Society process for their continued efforts in implementing the Principles and the Plan of Action of the Summit. In many areas, more than expected has been achieved. The relevance and impact of ICTs on our lives is far greater nowadays than in the past.

Germany has been actively engaged in the World Summit on the Information Society since its inception in 2003, having regularly and actively participated in the annual WSIS Forums as well as several WSIS+10 Review Meetings. We have also continually contributed to the WSIS Stocktaking Process in the past.

Germany has been among those donors that have explicitly embedded ICTs in bilateral development programmes and solutions with the aim of exploiting their potential for sustainable economic, ecologic and social development. Apart from application areas such as governance, health, agriculture, social security and education, we have also focused on promoting local IT sectors in our partner countries, which are fostering local innovation and thus the transformation of many other sectors.

We fully acknowledge that access, connectivity, innovation and utilization of ICTs have all grown as has the involvement of civil society and private sector for ICT for Development. Technology—particularly mobile end-user devices—has in the last decade become more versatile, powerful, cheaper and far easier to use. Worldwide, we use technology in ways unimaginable in 2003, the year of the first World Summit on the Information Society. This is the reason why we are committed to contribute to efforts that ensure that stable infrastructures are put in place and that access to ICTs remains affordable to everyone.

Despite all successes since 2003, a lot more can be done in terms of focusing on ICTs as a motor for change and drivers for sustainable development. Using ICT, things do not only get faster: We can also achieve and do things that were impossible before.

Germany therefore not only endorses the idea that ICTs should be included prominently in the UN's Post-2015 development framework, which should be interlocked with the Post-WSIS agenda, we will also accelerate embedding ICTs into our development strategies. In future, ICTs will also play a prominent role with regard to monitoring and evaluating the benefits of developed solutions by involving intended beneficiaries and the wider public about our intentions and expected outcomes. ICT-enabled platforms provide the means for transparency, accountability and participation.

At the same time, we will continue to promote the protection of human rights on the internet, including freedom of expression and the right to privacy, and models of good governance. The free flow of information empowers people to claim their rights in the public arena. Censorship and harassment of journalists, therefore, are unacceptable. We call on all states to publicly condemn all forms and incidents of attacks against journalists at the highest political level.

Technologies alone cannot guarantee the achievement of development goals— they must be underpinned with strategic policies and corresponding regulatory measures, creating an enabling environment which ensures a competitive, open, innovative, and inclusive information technology ecosystem.

Particularly in Africa—which stands at the centre of attention of the German development policy—the world has observed encouraging developments in terms of ICT production and utilisation. Far more than half of the continent's population own a mobile phone and increasingly many connect to the Internet through mobile networks. Opportunities for many Africans in terms of education and doing business are on the rise. While the figures are encouraging, the so called “digital divide” has not yet been bridged which is why further commitment and increased cooperation is necessary.

As one crucial enabler of sustainable development, Germany and others have been stressing the need for universal and inclusive access to education and have allocated significant funds in this regard in the past – and will continue to do so.

With Africa being increasingly connected, we see many opportunities for innovative approaches and applications using ICT in education on this continent. We shall work with our partners towards integrating ICTs into their education strategies to improve access to and quality of education. We shall further, in cooperation with our partners, explore how ICTs can enable students in disruptive educational situations in fragile contexts—such as in refugee camps or after a natural disaster—to continue their education. Young people in Africa have the ability to easily become digital natives as much as their counterparts in the developed world and this ability should be leveraged to the furthest possible extent.

We have further taken notice of the many creative ICT-solutions in Africa, some of which have disseminated globally. Having spoken to many entrepreneurs in Africa recently, we learned about the importance of south-south and south-north cooperation and knowledge exchange. We shall therefore continue to support technology-driven transformation and growth, powered by local creativity and entrepreneurship and are looking forward to more exciting innovations in this regard - we regard these as central contributions from the developing world to shaping tomorrow's information society.

We are looking forward to continue working together with the World Summit on the Information Society community towards a democratic, prosperous and inclusive society, driven by digital transformation.