

**High Level Policy Statement,
WSIS+10 High Level Event,
11 June 2014**

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Mr, Chair, Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

As a civil society initiative from a developing country, the Internet Democracy Project continues to find the WSIS process, with its emphasis on the links between ICTs and development, of great importance. We have therefore been among those civil society organisations that have actively participated in the MPP process from the very beginning, and we are happy that the input documents provide such strong reconfirmations of crucial issues like access to knowledge and information, cultural and linguistic diversity online through multilingualism, accessibility for disabled people and public access. These are all crucial issues for people in developing countries.

But there are also areas where we believe these documents could have been stronger. More than sixty years ago, the world community recognised the constitutive significance of gender equality and human rights in the creation of just societies, with equal opportunities for all when it adopted the international human rights instruments. As the world evolves and changes, it is crucial that we continue to think through how exactly human rights apply as the world evolves and changes. Such language should have found its way into the final document to a greater extent.

But there are other areas on which we will continue to have to work. Many of my colleagues before me have emphasised the continued importance and challenge of expanding access. But the access gap is no longer only a quantitative one. Even among those who do have access, inequalities are in many ways increasing, as gaps between developing and developed countries in average broadband speeds and in skills are widening – not in the least as a consequence of the fast pace of technological change. Moreover, the reliance on mobiles as the primary access point for many people in the developing world means that they have access to an Internet that is quite different from the one all of us use, and frequently only consists of a fragment of it.

Yet, and in part because we keep relying so much on text already agreed in the Geneva and Tunis phases of the WSIS, it can be questioned whether we have been able to sufficiently address these and other new challenges for people in the developing world as they have emerged over the past decade. If we really believe that ICTs can create a more level playing field for all people, from all parts of the world, we will need to acknowledge that what we agreed on ten years ago may not be sufficient to address today's challenges.

Like many others in civil society, the Internet Democracy Project is ready to do so. Like the NETmundial, the MPP was a remarkable experiment in multistakeholderism, and we believe that the ITU deserves to be commended for the courage and commitment that it has shown to further open and democratise our Internet governance processes within the UN system. Not everything

was perfect, and as we apply a multistakeholder approach in different settings, there are important lessons to be learned. But this can only be done if we build on what has gone before. As our governments are finalising the modalities of the overall WSIS review, we hope that they will make sure all stakeholders can live up to this challenge together as we move into the overall review.

Thank you.