WSIS in review

The World Summit on the Information Society: The end of an era or the start of something new?

David Souter

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was the largest single event in international debate on information and communications technologies (ICTs) during the past ten years. It absorbed a great deal of the time and resources of international organisations, governments, civil society organisations and businesses over a four-year period (2001 to 2005). It produced four documents setting out aspirations for the information society. It provided a framework for international discussion of infrastructure finance and internet governance. But it received only limited public attention and failed to bridge the paradigm gap between the worlds of information technology and international development. Sixteen months after it ended, its impact – on all parties – seems to be receding as technology and policy debate move on to meet new challenges.

What happened during the WSIS is the subject of a substantial report published by APC in early 2007.[1] This study is particularly concerned with the participation of developing countries and civil society, and with the question of whether the WSIS might have a lasting impact on their involvement in other ICT decision-making forums. It drew on four main sources of evidence:

- Participant observation of the WSIS process
- Desk research, in particular of documentation produced by developing countries and civil society
- Questionnaires and interviews with individual participants, including 40 detailed interviews with key actors in the WSIS process
- Case studies of experience in five developing countries: Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India and Kenya.

This introductory chapter of the Global Information Society Watch report briefly recounts the WSIS process, discusses the findings of this APC research, and sets the scene for the discussion of what has happened since the WSIS in the remainder of the report.

The WSIS story

The origins of the WSIS lie in a decision taken at the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU's) 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference to propose a world summit on the information society. It is doubtful if ITU delegates expected this to become a global summit of the kind which the United Nations holds regularly on different issues, but their resolution fed into earlier discussions within the UN system, where it met with interest from other agencies, notably UNESCO, and eventually led to such an outcome.

Summits are highly complex processes. The summit meeting itself is the last stage of a prolonged period of negotiation, and is primarily an opportunity for heads of state and government to make public statements and commit their countries to a formal declaration. The real work takes place in complex discussions over the previous year or two, in a series of regional meetings and preparatory committees (PrepComs). These are where what will become the final texts are hammered out and disputes addressed. Meaningful participation in summits means participation in this process as a whole, not at the final summit sessions.

The WSIS differed from the standard summit model in two ways.

Firstly, it was organised in two phases: one two-year phase leading to the first Summit in Geneva in December 2003, another to the second in Tunis in November 2005. This was justified as an opportunity to devote separate discussions to (firstly) principles and (secondly) implementation – though the underlying reason to hold the Summit in two phases was failure within the UN system to choose between two willing hosts. The two-phase structure increased the cost and complexity of participation but did not in practice achieve the separation of discussions into principles and implementation that was proposed. The second phase of the WSIS was very largely preoccupied with narrow issues of internet governance.

Secondly, the WSIS was organised by a technical agency of the United Nations, the ITU, rather than by the UN's central organisation. This was controversial. The "information society" includes wide-ranging cultural and developmental issues which fall more naturally into the remit of agencies like UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rather than the technocratic ITU. An underlying tension between broader development goals and goals of the ICT sector lasted throughout the WSIS. This was accompanied by suspicions that some within the ITU were seeking to use the WSIS in order to extend its authority over much wider "information society" issues, in particular over the internet. The ITU's lead role also affected the nature of participation in national delegations (see below).

The first phase of the WSIS, up to the Geneva Summit in 2003, developed two general texts: a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. These texts were agreed in negotiations between governments, though other stakeholders sought to influence them with varying degrees of success. The Declaration sets out the Summit's (considerable) aspirations for the role of ICTs in transforming social and economic life. The Plan of Action brings together many different issues and identifies possible areas for international action, including targets related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[2]

A number of issues proved contentious during the first phase, including the right of non-governmental stakeholders to take part in WSIS negotiations, and issues concerning the relationship between information, communication and wider human rights. Two issues proved intractable and were referred to separate forums which met between the first and second WSIS phases.

1 Souter, D. (2007). *Whose Information Society?* [online]. Available from APC: <www.apc.org>.

2 See: <www.un.org/millenniumgoals>.

- The Task Force on Financing Mechanisms (TFFM) considered ICT infrastructure finance following failure to agree at the first Summit on a proposal to set up a "Digital Solidarity Fund". It worked along conventional UN task force lines, drawing on consultant reports and discussion (mostly) among key governments and intergovernmental players.
- The Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) was concerned with the way the internet is managed – in particular, the perception among many developing countries that critical resources are ultimately controlled by the United States, or the feeling that they should be managed by an intergovernmental forum. The WGIG was more innovative than the TFFM, drawing participants from a wider range of stakeholder groups.

The second phase of the WSIS was predominantly concerned with these two deferred issues. In practice, agreement on infrastructure finance was reached quickly, and the final year of the WSIS process was overwhelmingly concerned with internet governance.

The final outputs of the WSIS process were two further documents, the Tunis Commitment, reiterating the first Summit's conclusions, and the Tunis Agenda, which drew out the second Summit's conclusions on the two deferred issues and set out follow-up procedures for implementation. A summary of the Agenda "commitments" can be found in the following chapter on WSIS follow-up.

WSIS issues

Global summits are expensive ways of doing international business. They require large investments in time and money, especially for the governments of smaller countries and non-governmental actors, and they raise high expectations. Although little voiced in public at the time that plans for the WSIS were agreed, there was a good deal of scepticism among international officials about the merits of a World Summit on the Information Society and whether its outcomes would justify the costs incurred.

The WSIS also meant different things to different people. *Prima facie*, a World Summit on the Information Society might have been expected to address issues of importance in many aspects of all societies. In practice, it focused on a much narrower range of issues: the relationship between ICTs and fundamental rights, that between ICTs and development, infrastructure finance, and internet governance. It was more a summit on aspects of the information society rather than on the information society per se. It paid little attention, in particular, to issues concerning the impact of ICTs on relations between the citizen and the state – which is likely to be significant if/as the organisation of society is increasingly based around the acquisition and use of data which is digitally stored.

The WSIS did significantly raise awareness of ICT and ICD (information and communications for development) issues, particularly within developing country governments. Most of those who took part would agree that it also provided valuable opportunities for networking and for sharing of experience, especially in informal contacts outside the main negotiating framework.

The WSIS did little, however, to move forward debates on ICT or ICD, or to engage the ICT sector with mainstream development or rights communities. It was, overwhelmingly, a meeting place for those already involved in ICT or ICD. Nor did it engage significantly with the main development policy initiatives with which it coincided, notably the September 2005 Millennium Review Summit (which paid virtually no attention to the role of ICTs in development and poverty reduction). Many development agencies are increasingly concerned about the evident "paradigm gap" concerning ICTs between ICD professionals and the mainstream development community. With hindsight, the WSIS missed a major opportunity to bring together ICD enthusiasts and sceptics to address this gap.

Since the WSIS ended, its outcome texts on development have proved too vague and ill-defined in practice to act as guidelines for either ICT or development agencies' programme planning. The process used to gather input for inclusion in the outcome documents made it easier to construct lists of aspirations and desiderata than to analyse the evidence and draw priorities. This is unhelpful when it comes to deciding how to allocate resources. The low level of interest shown in WSIS follow-up processes – with the exception of the Internet Governance Forum – suggests that they will not have much impact in the future.

There has been much debate about whether developing countries gained significantly in the two major issues debated within the WSIS. Where infrastructure finance is concerned, the idea of establishing a separate Digital Solidarity Fund – promoted by President Wade of Senegal and other African delegations – foundered in the TFFM, and was not pursued by its proponents in the second phase. However, debate on the issue did lead to some rethinking of infrastructure needs by major donors including the World Bank and the European Commission. Discussions on internet governance ended in the kind of compromise that all sides could consider acceptable from their point of view: the United States made no significant concessions on its current status; new procedures and one new institution were agreed which might gradually move internet governance forward over time; and the multi-stakeholder principle was included in texts that might otherwise have sought to extend governmental power over the internet.

Developing country participation

Summits differ from conventional or permanent decision-making bodies in many ways. They are concerned with broad principles rather than with detail. Their conclusions are reached by consensus rather than contested votes. Their decisions are not binding while those of bodies like the ITU and ICANN set rules with which governments and businesses have to comply.

Developing country participation in permanent ICT decision-making bodies was assessed in the *Louder Voices* report, prepared in 2002 for the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force). This report identified two main types of problem identified by developing country participants in interviews (CTO/Panos, 2002). These were summarised as follows:

A. Weaknesses in national policy processes:

   I. Lack of policy awareness, at all levels of government and citizenship, of the potential role of ICTs in development.

   II. Lack of technical and policy capacity on ICT issues, particularly in respect of emerging technologies and new policy area.

   III. Weaknesses in national and regional policy-making processes, which variously included weaknesses in political leadership; absence of national ICT strategies; ineffective coordination between different government departments and agencies with ICT responsibilities; lack of private sector and civil society participation in national decision-making; inadequate preparation for international meetings; and ineffective use of financial and human resources.

B. Weaknesses in international policy processes:

   I. Lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues, decision-making forums and processes.

   II. Logistical problems, including the frequency and location of international meetings and restrictions on participation (for example, by private sector and civil society experts).

   III. Ineffective use of financial resources available to support participation.

Some differences to this distribution of problems were evident in the WSIS. Because the WSIS dealt in generalities rather than detail, less technical and policy expertise was necessary for participation. Because its conclusions had less direct impact on future conduct – because it did not change the way ICTs are actually governed – it was taken less seriously, and attended at a less senior level, by industrial than by developing countries. Indeed, for some of the former, participation was not so much about making sure that things got better as making sure that things did not get worse from their perspective.

Developing country participation in the WSIS varied markedly in scale. Some countries had large delegations – for example, Senegal and South Africa – while some, particularly smaller countries, sent only a few representatives, and some took no part in the process whatsoever.

It is important to distinguish here between the impact of a few developing countries and the impact of developing countries as a whole. The internet governance debate provided a platform for some larger developing countries to assert their influence and authority, in a way comparable with new alignments in other international negotiations. Smaller countries and least-developed countries (LDCs) were more concerned with specific development questions, such as infrastructure finance. There were some tensions between developing country delegations resulting from these different perspectives.

Across the WSIS overall, national delegations were largely made up of diplomats and the "telecommunications establishment", i.e. telecoms ministries and regulators and fixed telecommunications operators. This was, perhaps, inevitable given that the ITU had lead responsibility for the WSIS: invitations to participate naturally went to the government departments responsible for working with the ITU. Mobile networks, the internet community and private sector operators were poorly represented, if at all, in most delegations, and there were also few participants from mainstream development ministries (finance, planning, health, education, etc.).

This had a significant effect on the scope and quality of debate. Like the ITU, national telecommunications officials and fixed network operators have little expertise in mainstream development issues such as health and education, or in issues like human rights. The weakness of the WSIS texts in these areas betrays the lack of substantial input from such mainstream expertise. Instead, the WSIS focused most strongly on issues of particular importance within the telecoms debate that were natural to the ITU – infrastructure and the management of technical resources. One can only speculate whether different outcomes might have resulted had the WSIS been led by an information or development organisation like UNESCO or the UNDP rather than a communications technology agency like the ITU.

A few countries included civil society representatives in their delegations, while others strongly opposed the presence of civil society representatives, even as observers, in formal negotiations. Where civil society representatives were included, however, they were usually constrained by delegation policy and played little part in presenting national policy positions.

Women were also under-represented in WSIS delegations. Just 19% of delegations at each of the main Summit events, in Geneva and in Tunis, were women.

Five national case studies carried out for the APC research showed considerable variation in the extent of consultation and participation in WSIS discourse at a national level. In many countries, policy-making remained largely within the narrow confines of government ICT officialdom, though in some, such as Kenya, civil society and private sector actors played a significant part. Media attention to the WSIS was minimal in most cases. Where civil society organisations did seek to get involved, in case study countries, their participation was often reactive rather than central to the formulation of national policy. Much the same could be said of local internet communities – again with the exception of Kenya, where the formation of a lobbying alliance between private sector and civil society organisations did much to extend input in ways that may have a more lasting impact.

Civil society participation

Civil society involvement in UN summits has increased over the years, sometimes including the holding of "alternative" summits alongside the main event. No such alternative event was organised in the case of the WSIS, and many participants feel that the Summit did represent a significant advance in civil society participation. The ITU's lack of experience with civil society may have fostered this, by giving more autonomy and responsibility to a civil society bureau within the secretariat, and creating more opportunities for civil society organisations to innovate within the summit framework.

Civil society representatives were able to make presentations during plenary sessions of the Summit. More importantly, they were able to work informally with government delegates and other interest groups to ensure the inclusion of a number of issues in the WSIS texts – notably on child protection and on internet governance, where much of the mandate for the Internet Governance Forum derived from wording that originated with civil society organisations. Importantly, too, many civil society participants felt that they gained substantially from the networking opportunities that the WSIS offered – both during the preparatory process (in which organisations had to work together) and in the Summits themselves (when many organisations were able to present their work in the associated exhibition and workshop spaces).

Civil society participation in PrepComs and, to a lesser extent, the Geneva and Tunis Summits themselves, was, like that of governments, concentrated among those with particular ICT/ICD interests. Few mainstream development or human rights NGOs attended any part of the process, and this substantially weakened civil society's capacity to contribute to the development agenda in particular. Developing countries were also disproportionately under-represented in civil society participation – partly because of a lack of resources, partly because few civil society organisations in developing countries had tracked information society issues in the past, and partly because those which had were less likely to be included in their own national discourse on WSIS issues.

There were important differences in civil society experience of the two Summits. In the Geneva phase, civil society had a wider range of issues to discuss. The whole character of the "information society" seemed up for grabs, and there were points of principle to argue – notably about human rights – on which civil society could coalesce. The hostility of some government delegations also fostered a sense of community and solidarity. The quality of civil society organisation and sense of unity or purpose were weaker in the second phase, though the Internet Governance Caucus provided a powerful instrument to advance positions which civil society shared with the internet community. Sharing the experience of government hostility to their participation during the early stages of the first Summit phase also built a stronger sense of partnership between civil society and private sector representation than has been seen in many other summits, and this helped both civil society and the private sector to pursue their agendas through the Summit as a whole.

As in other summits, caucusing lay at the heart of civil society participation. Caucuses have been used in a number of summits by civil society organisations to formulate and promote common positions. Plenary caucuses in the WSIS were supplemented by those concerned with particular issues under discussion. The caucus process during the WSIS was more effective during the first phase – when the rights of civil society to participate were threatened, and where significant input was achieved into the Declaration of Principles (ITU, 2003a), though not the Action Plan (ITU, 2003b) – than during the second (when the focus was much more on a single issue, and the unity of civil society was disrupted by the participation of pro-government Tunisian NGOs). Civil society caucusing also led to the publication of specific civil society viewpoints, published during the Geneva meeting[3] and a month after the conclusion of the Tunis Summit.[4]

The costs and benefits of participation in the WSIS are still debated within civil society. The financial cost and opportunity cost in personnel time were very considerable for those organisations that took the WSIS seriously. Policy gains, in terms of WSIS outcomes, were limited. Where gains were made was in extending organisations' understanding of issues and in their building networks outside their own regions and specialisms that would not otherwise have been available to them. The value of this should not be underestimated, though it is questionable how well these networks can survive without the focus that WSIS PrepComs provided for them.

The other potential area of "gain" lies in the acceptance, within the WSIS, of multi-stakeholder principles for ICT decision-making. "We recognise that building an inclusive Information Society requires new forms of solidarity, partnership and cooperation among governments and other stakeholders, i.e. the private sector, civil society and international organisations," as the Geneva Plan of Action put it, presaging multi-stakeholder engagement in the future (ITU, 2003b). This principle, in a sense, seeks to extend the multipolar character of policy development within most nation-states (where government authority is divided between different levels of government, and where a variety of government agencies share power with non-governmental actors) into the international sphere (where governments see themselves as representing national interests in their entirety).

A multi-stakeholder approach also characterised the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), whose diverse members acted as individuals working towards a common goal rather than as representatives of specific institutions. There has been a lot of discussion about whether the WGIG offers a model for other decision-making processes. The APC research notes that the issues facing the WGIG differed from those in other ICT forums – in particular, that governments lacked authority over the internet and were therefore not conceding ground to other stakeholders in accepting the WGIG format. But the success which many felt the WGIG process represented may encourage repetition of the experience in other issues which are technically complex and highly polarised. In any event, the multi-stakeholder principle was extended by the Tunis agreements into WSIS' follow-up, notably into the Internet Governance Forum.

After WSIS

Sixteen months on from the Tunis Summit, it is difficult to see that the WSIS is having much lasting impact on the issues it discussed, with the exception of internet governance. The quality of its development texts was poor. Much more significant documents and initiatives on

3 *Shaping information societies for human needs.* Civil society declaration to the World Summit on the Information Society. Available from: <www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/civil-society-declaration.pdf>.

4 *Much more could have been achieved.* WSIS civil society statement on WSIS. Available from: <www.worldsummit2003.de/download_en/WSIS-CS-summit-statement-rev1-23-12-2005-en.pdf>.

ICT and ICD have been written and undertaken outside the WSIS framework during the past five years than within it. The WSIS does seem to have drawn more attention to the lack of evidence and critical evaluation available concerning ICT's impact on development, and to the paradigm gap between ICT and development professionals. Some international agencies are now seeking to address these. Many developing country governments were made more aware of ICT issues by the WSIS, and ICT and ICD are being included in more national poverty reduction strategies. There has also been a shift in thinking about infrastructure finance, following the TFFM. However, these developments do not represent a revolution in thinking about the information society of the kind that the WSIS' advocates had hoped to see.

The structure of WSIS follow-up processes is described in the next chapter. Insofar as wider civil society participation is concerned, this can be divided into two main sections: the action line processes intended to track the WSIS outcome text conclusions; and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). A few comments are worth making here on each of these.

The first round of "action line" meetings held in May 2006 was very poorly attended and produced little in the way of new initiatives. Very little subsequent activity has taken place since then within the action line structure, though there have been significant new developments outside. It is difficult to see the action line structure, which has no independent resources, offering much of a framework for future cooperation or any significant legacy for the WSIS. The second round of action line meetings in May 2007 will probably establish whether there is any further mileage in them.

The IGF is a different matter. Its first meeting – in Athens in November 2006 – was almost universally considered a success. Although formally a UN meeting, it adopted procedures very much at odds with UN traditions. Rather than giving exclusive rights to governments, or even equivalence to stakeholder communities, it treated all participants – regardless of their origins – as equals. Plenary and workshop sessions had a strongly multi-stakeholder character. Debates were open and few people spoke in the kind of code that characterises many international meetings. However, all of this was facilitated by the fact that the IGF has no decision-making powers. Its value lies in that it is a "talking shop", not a negotiating forum. It is very doubtful if it could have been successful as the latter. What it may illustrate is that, far from being a waste of time, "talking shops" may be a very necessary way of increasing understanding between stakeholder communities of the different views that people hold and the reasons why they hold them.

More interesting than the action lines, and as interesting as the IGF, is the question of whether the experience of the WSIS is likely to bring about any change in the way that permanent ICT decision-making forums go about their business.

The WSIS was, ultimately, a one-off event, in which developing country participation was more substantial and assertive than it is in permanent ICT decision-making forums such as the ITU and WTO. This was partly because summit dynamics make it easier for developing countries to manage their participation, and partly because industrial countries did not see the WSIS as a priority. Few interviewees for the APC research, however, felt that the WSIS had significantly changed the balance of power in ongoing policy debates in permanent decision-making forums, in likely outcomes arising from them, or in their arrangements for participation, except where internet governance is concerned.

The ITU discussed some WSIS-related changes at its November 2006 Plenipotentiary Conference, but it is not yet clear how these – and the ITU's own identity - will develop. These discussions are considered in the ITU chapter of this report, but the ITU's response has been in fact quite cautious and it does not seem likely to significantly extend its remit within the wider information society. WSIS debates have also had some influence on thinking within ICANN about its future. But it is hard to see any significant changes resulting in the way that other ICT decision-makers – from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to the regional telecommunications agencies – expect to operate in future.

In practice, the report concludes that the institutional dynamics of participation require much more substantial changes in both international institutions and national policy-making processes if they are to enhance developing country participation – a conclusion very much in line with that of the *Louder Voices* report. While the WSIS raised awareness of ICT and ICD issues in many countries, at least among government officials and some NGOs, it did not facilitate capacity-building or change policy-making relationships at a national level. Unless those weaknesses are addressed, many developing countries will find it as difficult to represent their priorities effectively in future in specialist ICT decision-making forums as they did before the WSIS, which might be considered another opportunity missed. The *Louder Voices* conclusions, in short, would seem to stand. ■

References

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Post-WSIS spaces for building a global information society

Willie Currie

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in two stages, one ending in Geneva in 2003 and the other ending in Tunis in 2005. The Geneva Summit produced two outcome documents, the Geneva Declaration of Principles (ITU, 2003a) and the Geneva Plan of Action (ITU, 2003b). The Tunis Summit also produced two outcome documents, the Tunis Commitment (ITU, 2005a) and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (ITU, 2005b).

These documents are the key reference points for the follow-up and implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society commits governments, international organisations, the private sector and civil society to building a people-centred, inclusive, development-oriented and non-discriminatory information society by implementing the following activities:

- Mainstreaming and aligning national e-strategies with local and national development priorities.
- Convening a meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) – a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on internet governance.
- Developing public policy for the internet through a process towards enhanced cooperation by governments in consultation with all stakeholders, including the development of globally applicable principles on public policy issues associated with the coordination and management of critical internet resources.
- Developing strategies for increasing affordable global connectivity, thereby facilitating improved and equitable access for all, by promoting internet transit and interconnection costs that are commercially negotiated in a competitive environment and that should be oriented towards objective, transparent and non-discriminatory parameters and setting up regional high-speed internet backbone networks and the creation of national, subregional and regional internet exchange points (IXPs).
- Improving existing financing mechanisms for universal access to ICTs for development, capacity building and bridging the digital divide.
- Welcoming the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) established in Geneva as an innovative financial mechanism of a voluntary nature open to interested stakeholders by focusing mainly on specific and urgent needs at the local level and seeking new voluntary sources of "solidarity" finance.
- Developing and implementing enabling policies that reflect national realities and that promote a supportive international environment, foreign direct investment as well as the mobilisation of domestic resources, in order to promote and foster entrepreneurship, particularly small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs).
- Building ICT capacity for all and confidence in the use of ICTs by all – including youth, older persons, women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and remote and rural communities – through the improvement and delivery of relevant education and training programmes and systems including lifelong and distance learning.
- Implementing effective training and education, particularly in ICT science and technology, that motivate and promote participation and active involvement of girls and women in the decision-making process of building the information society.
- Paying special attention to the formulation of universal design concepts and the use of assistive technologies that promote access for all persons, including those with disabilities.
- Promoting public policies aimed at providing affordable access at all levels, including community-level, to hardware as well as software and connectivity through an increasingly converging technological environment, capacity building and local content.
- Improving access to the world's health knowledge and telemedicine services, in particular in areas such as global cooperation in emergency response, access to and networking among health professionals to help improve quality of life and environmental conditions.
- Building ICT capacities to improve access and use of postal networks and services.
- Using ICTs to improve access to agricultural knowledge, combat poverty, and support production of and access to locally relevant agriculture-related content.
- Developing and implementing e-government applications based on open standards in order to enhance the growth and interoperability of e-government systems, at all levels, thereby furthering access to government information and services, and contributing to building ICT networks and developing services that are available anywhere and anytime, to anyone and on any device.
- Supporting educational, scientific, and cultural institutions, including libraries, archives and museums, in their role of developing, providing equitable, open and affordable access to, and preserving diverse and varied content, including in digital form, to support informal and formal education, research and innovation; and in particular supporting libraries in their public service role of providing free and equitable access to information and of improving ICT literacy and community connectivity, particularly in underserved communities.
- Enhancing the capacity of communities in all regions to develop content in local and/or indigenous languages.
- Strengthening the creation of quality e-content, on national, regional and international levels.
- Promoting the use of traditional and new media in order to foster universal access to information, culture and knowledge for

all people, especially vulnerable populations and populations in developing countries and using, inter alia, radio and television as educational and learning tools.

- Reaffirming the independence, pluralism and diversity of media, and freedom of information including through, as appropriate, the development of domestic legislation.
- Strongly encouraging ICT enterprises and entrepreneurs to develop and use environment-friendly production processes in order to minimise the negative impacts of the use and manufacture of ICTs and disposal of ICT waste on people and the environment.
- Incorporating regulatory, self-regulatory, and other effective policies and frameworks to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation through ICTs into national plans of action and e-strategies.
- Promoting the development of advanced research networks, at national, regional and international levels, in order to improve collaboration in science, technology and higher education.
- Promoting voluntary service, at the community level, to help maximise the developmental impact of ICTs.
- Promoting the use of ICTs to enhance flexible ways of working, including teleworking, leading to greater productivity and job creation.
- Promoting disaster early warning systems by technical cooperation and enhancing the capacity of countries, particularly developing countries, in utilising ICT tools for disaster early warning, management and emergency communications, including dissemination of understandable warnings to those at risk.
- Making available child helplines, taking into account the need for mobilisation of appropriate resources. For this purpose, easy-to-remember numbers, accessible from all phones and free of charge, should be made available.
- Digitising our historical data and cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations.

How this is to be done is through post-WSIS follow-up and implementation mechanisms, specified in the Tunis Agenda.

WSIS follow-up

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was called on to oversee the system-wide follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of WSIS. To this end, ECOSOC, at its substantive session of 2006, was to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), including considering the strengthening of the Commission, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach.

WSIS implementation

The Tunis Agenda called on UN agencies and other intergovernmental organisations, in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 57/270 B, to facilitate activities among different stakeholders, including civil society and the business sector, to help national governments in their implementation efforts (UN, 2003). The Agenda further asked the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with members of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to establish within the CEB a UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) consisting of the relevant UN bodies and organisations, with the mandate to facilitate the implementation of WSIS outcomes. It was suggested that in selecting the lead agency or agencies of this group, the experience of and activities in the WSIS process undertaken by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) should be taken into consideration.

WSIS implementation and follow-up should be an integral part of the UN integrated follow-up to major UN conferences and should contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[1] It should not require the creation of any new operational bodies. International and regional organisations should assess and report regularly on universal accessibility of nations to ICTs, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of ICT sectors of developing countries.

Great importance is attached to multi-stakeholder implementation at the international level, which should be organised taking into account the themes and action lines in the Geneva Plan of Action, and moderated or facilitated by UN agencies when appropriate.

The experience of, and the activities undertaken by UN agencies in the WSIS process – notably the ITU, UNESCO and the UNDP – should continue to be used to their fullest extent. These three agencies should play leading facilitating roles in the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and organise a meeting of moderators/facilitators of action lines. The coordination of multi-stakeholder implementation activities would help to avoid duplication of activities. This should include, *inter alia*, information exchange, creation of knowledge, sharing of best practices, and assistance in developing multi-stakeholder and public/private partnerships.

The United Nations General Assembly is to make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015.

Monitoring and evaluation

Periodic evaluation, using an agreed methodology, of the implementation process should be undertaken by developing appropriate indicators and benchmarking, including community connectivity indicators. It should clarify the magnitude of the "digital divide", in both its domestic and international dimensions, and keep it under regular assessment, and track global progress in the use of ICTs to achieve internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs.

WSIS follow-up and implementation activities in 2006

Action line implementation

A consultation meeting of WSIS action line facilitators/moderators was convened in Geneva on 24 February 2006 by the ITU, the UNDP and UNESCO in their role as lead facilitating agencies for the multi-stakeholder implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action.

A number of different UN agencies and other organisations and entities offered their services to facilitate, or co-facilitate, specific action lines and themes, or stated their intention to do so. In addition, it was agreed that each action line would nominate its own chair. In order to launch activities under each action line and facilitate the initial contacts among facilitators and participants, it was agreed that one agency should be provisionally appointed as the interim focal point for each action line and theme.[2]

1 <www.un.org/millenniumgoals>.

2 For the list of facilitators, see: <www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/facilitators.html>.

A number of organisations commented on the draft terms of reference for the facilitators of each action line and for the lead facilitating agencies (ITU, UNESCO and UNDP). The main changes made were to ensure that the multi-stakeholder implementation process remained as a bottom-up process and made full use of online tools to ensure maximum inclusiveness (ITU, 2006a and 2006b).

It was agreed that where possible, WSIS-related meetings should be clustered together, to make the best use of available resources and to make it easier for those who need to travel.

The next step was the convening of a cluster of WSIS-related events in Geneva from 9 to 19 May 2006. This included the renaming of World Telecommunications Day to become World Information Society Day, to be held annually on May 17. A first round of action line facilitation meetings was held, convened by the following organisations:

- ITU for action line C2: Access to infrastructure and C5: Security. For C2 it was the second meeting after a first meeting at the World Telecommunications Development meeting in Doha in March 2006.
- UNDP for action lines C4: Capacity building and C6: Enabling environment
- UNESCO for C8: Cultural diversity
- UN-DESA for C1: The role of all stakeholders, C11: International and regional cooperation and C7: ICT applications/E-government
- UNCTAD and ILO joint meeting for C7: ICT applications/E-business and C7: ICT applications/E-employment.

During this first round of action line facilitation meetings, most meetings focused on:

- A report on WSIS outcomes in the respective area of the respective action line
- Briefings by participants on their respective projects
- Presentations by stakeholders on possible priorities for action and modalities for cooperation
- Exchange of views by participants on the objectives of the group.

Between 16 and 22 October 2006, UNESCO convened meetings of action lines C3: Access to information and knowledge, C10: Ethical dimensions of the information society, C7: ICT applications/E-learning and C9: Media in Paris, and of C7: ICT applications/E-science in Beijing.[3]

Table 1 shows the revised annex to the Tunis Agenda indicating the provisional moderators/facilitators of each action line.

Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

At its ninth session held in Geneva on 15 to 19 May 2006, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held a multi-stakeholder panel discussion on the role of the Commission in United Nations system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the WSIS.

The CSTD agreed that the substantive agenda item for the 2006-2008 review and policy cycle will be "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society, with a view to enhancing digital opportunities for all people,"[4] with special emphasis on development dimensions of ICTs, including risk-benefit analysis to bridge the "digital divide".

A joint bureau meeting was held between ECOSOC and the Commission on 16 May 2006. The president of ECOSOC briefed the bureaux on the outcome of its open-ended consultation on the role of the CSTD in the follow-up to the WSIS held the same day. The president also observed that the new role of the CSTD should be reviewed by ECOSOC, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/252. It was noted that the point of departure at the ECOSOC 2006 substantive session in July should not be whether, but rather how the CSTD should assist ECOSOC in the system-wide follow-up to the WSIS.[5]

ECOSOC passed a resolution (E/2006/L.37) on 28 July 2006 entitled "Follow-up to the WSIS and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development", where it indicated how it will oversee the system-wide follow-up of the WSIS outcomes. ECOSOC decided that the Commission will assist the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up of WSIS. This will involve:

- A strong development orientation
- Reviewing and assessing progress on the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS, including the action lines at regional and international levels
- Sharing best practices and lessons learned
- Promoting dialogue and fostering partnerships to contribute to the attainment of the WSIS objectives and the implementation of its outcomes
- Strengthening the CSTD by the addition of ten new members from member states
- Enabling multi-stakeholder participation in the CSTD by relaxing the rules of accreditation for the private sector and civil society.

UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS)

The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) was launched at a meeting of high-level representatives of 22 UN agencies on 14 July 2006 at ITU headquarters in Geneva.

UNGIS will serve as an interagency coordinating mechanism within the UN system to implement the outcomes of WSIS. The Group will enable synergies aimed at resolving substantive and policy issues, avoiding redundancies and enhancing effectiveness of the system while raising public awareness about the goals and objectives of the global information society. UNGIS will also work to highlight the importance of ICTs in meeting the MDGs.

To maximise its efficiency, the Group agreed on a work plan in which it would concentrate its collective efforts each year on one or two cross-cutting themes and on a few selected countries.

UNGIS will work to accomplish the following tasks:

- Monitor progress and key activities relating to the implementation of WSIS outcomes, based on input and reports from CEB member organisations.
- Work with the UN Secretary-General to ensure that the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action is closely linked to the planning and implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) at the country level.

3 See <www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/meetings.html> for reports on the meetings.

4 See: <www.unctad.org/Templates/Meeting.asp?intItemID=2068&lang=1&m=12233&year=2006&month=11>.

5 See <www.unctad.org/Templates/meting.asp?intItemID=1942&lang=1&m=11157>.

Table 1: Annex to Tunis Agenda (revised)

Action line		Possible moderators/facilitators
C1.	The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development	ECOSOC/UN Regional Commissions/ITU/[**UN DESA**]
C2.	Information and communication infrastructure	**ITU**/[*APC*]
C3.	Access to information and knowledge	ITU/**UNESCO**/[FAO/UNIDO]
C4.	Capacity building	**UNDP**/UNESCO/ITU/UNCTAD/[UN DESA/FAO/UNIDO]
C5.	Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	**ITU**
C6.	Enabling environment	ITU/**UNDP**/UN Regional Commissions/UNCTAD/ [UN DESA/UNIDO/*APC*]
C7.	ICT applications	
	• E-government	[**UN DESA**]/UNDP/ITU
	• E-business	WTO/**UNCTAD**/ITU/UPU
	• E-learning	**UNESCO**/ITU/UNIDO
	• E-health	**WHO**/ITU
	• E-employment	**ILO**/ITU
	• E-environment	WHO/**WMO**/UNEP/UN-Habitat/ITU/ICAO
	• E-agriculture	**FAO**/ITU
	• E-science	**UNESCO**/ITU/UNCTAD/[WHO]
C8.	Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content	**UNESCO**
C9.	Media	**UNESCO**
C10.	Ethical dimensions of the information society	**UNESCO**/ECOSOC/[WHO/*ECPAT Int'l*]
C11.	International and regional cooperation	UN Regional Commissions/UNDP/ ITU/UNESCO/ ECOSOC/[**UN DESA**]

Source: ITU

Note: Additions proposed at the meeting of action line moderators/facilitators on 24 February are [underlined and in square brackets]. Civil society entities are indicated in *italics*. Those agencies shown in bold would be the provisional focal point for each action line.

- Facilitate interagency information exchange and activities, including sharing of experiences and lessons learned in particular with regard to WSIS goals, by ensuring the coherence of the stock-taking exercise.
- Work closely with the Partnership for the Measuring of ICT for Development in order to streamline the approach of the UN system to the development of appropriate indicators and benchmarking.
- Promote effective communication and collaboration between the UN system, intergovernmental organisations outside the UN system, and civil society and private sector partners, including in relation to the work of multi-stakeholder groups or networks.
- Identify key accomplishments and make recommendations on overall policy and coordination as well as proposing effective reporting requirements for the WSIS, for consideration by the UN system.
- Establish mechanisms to report regularly to other WSIS stakeholders on its activities, in particular on preparation of any analytical reports on WSIS implementation to be delivered to ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly.
- Disseminate information on the status of WSIS implementation within the UN system as well as to the general public.

In the coming period, UNGIS will focus on bringing the efforts of the UN system to bear on expanding access to communications, for instance, through multimedia community centres, teleshops, etc. Drawing on the respective competencies of the different members of the Group, UNGIS will also focus on applications related to e-health and e-tourism. At the same time, the Group will examine the e-readiness strategies and policies of one or two countries, to be proposed by the UNDP, to develop a comprehensive toolkit for bringing the benefits of the information society to developing countries.

During the first year, UNGIS will be chaired by the ITU, with UNESCO, the UNDP and WHO acting as vice-chairs (ITU, 2006c).[6]

Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)

On 17 April 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan approved the launch of a Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID).[7] While not formally mentioned in the Tunis Agenda as part of WSIS implementation, GAID emerged from the UN ICT Task Force, whose mandate ended in 2005, and is part of a parallel but related process to the WSIS.

6 See: <www.ungis.org/dnngen>.

7 See: <www.un-gaid.org>.

The mission of GAID will be to facilitate and promote the integration of ICT into development, including the MDGs, by providing a platform for an open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the role of ICT in development. It will thus contribute to linking the outcomes of the WSIS with the broader UN development agenda.

The alliance will organise thematic events addressing core issues related to the role of ICT in economic development, the eradication of poverty, and employment and enterprise in pro-poor growth scenarios, with particular focus on health, education, gender, youth, and disabled and disadvantaged segments of society.

GAID will function primarily as a decentralised network, open to participation of all stakeholders, including governments, business, civil society and international organisations. The Alliance will aim significantly to expand the circle of participants in policy and partnership debate beyond the traditional set of stakeholders, by actively engaging constituencies that currently are not adequately involved, particularly non-governmental participants from developing countries, media, academia, youth and women's groups.

GAID was launched at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 19 to 20 June 2006.

The participants in the meeting agreed that:

- The multi-stakeholder approach should be a key principle of GAID and of all ICT for development (ICT4D) programmes.
- The potential of ICT as a transformative development tool has been recognised, but efforts should now be challenged to support effective and rapid implementation.
- ICT4D must be placed within a comprehensive development strategy and programmes focused on social development and economic growth using ICT with a systematic transformation process of the socioeconomic structure towards the knowledge society and economy.
- ICT4D programmes should be localised and community-driven and not technology-driven.
- There is a need to realign and recalibrate existing policies and strategies for development with a dimension on ICT as a strategic enabler for all development programmes nationally and globally.
- The focus should be on key priority areas that are considered most impactful: education, health, entrepreneurship and participation in policy debate and decision making (governance).
- GAID needs to "think big" and, to this end, address the issue of sustainability, scalability and replicability upfront.
- GAID recognises the different needs and capacities of the target communities in formulating and implementation of ICT4D.
- A total solutions orientation should be adopted to produce sustained results and impact.
- Capacity building for ICT as an enabler for development should be addressed in a holistic manner.
- Content development and applications should be addressed as strategic challenges driven by grassroots and community-based approaches.
- It is essential to measure, monitor, recognise and promote initiatives among stakeholders participating in GAID towards achieving MDGs.
- Large private sector companies, small and medium-scale enterprises and entrepreneurs should be actively engaged in ICT4D policies and programmes.
- Major development banks and donor agencies should be encouraged to take an active role in the Alliance.
- The pivotal role of youth as creators, champions and implementers of ICT4D initiatives and activities needs to strengthened.
- Gender mainstreaming is imperative for making ICT4D activities relevant, effective and sustainable.

The following are some of the initiatives proposed at the GAID inaugural meeting:

- To consider establishing a Cyber Development Corps (CyDevCorps) under the umbrella of the UN, based on the multi-stakeholder approach and with a South-South collaborative dimension.
- To consider promoting the establishment of resource centres to promote programmes to build human capital through multilateral and multi-sectoral cooperation and to facilitate sharing of best practices, information exchange and discourse for GAID.
- To consider setting up thematic and regional networks and working groups with a view to enhancing outreach and promoting partnership for action.

GAID set up a structure of governing bodies:

- A Steering Committee to provide executive direction
- A Strategy Council comprising 60 members representing governments and non-governmental stakeholders – civil society, the private sector, international organisations, media, academia, youth and women's groups – to provide strategic guidance
- A group of High Level Advisors for policy and expert advice
- A Champions Network of activists, experts and practitioners to build its activities.

In addition, GAID encouraged the formation of Communities of Expertise to:

- Analyse existing projects, programmes and practices with a view to identifying best practices and/or developing guidelines, standards or templates for discussion.
- Conduct research studies on cutting-edge, new or emerging issues, identifying a technological or/and organisational solution to tackling a barrier to development using ICT.
- Identify actors/opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships and resource mobilisation for this purpose.

GAID subsequently held a global forum with the theme "Our Common Humanity in the Information Age: Principles and Values for Development" on 29 November 2006 at UN headquarters in New York.[8]

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The purpose of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is to provide a space for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on internet governance. In accordance with paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, the mandate of the Forum is to:

8 See <www.un-gaid.org/commonhumanity>.

- Discuss public policy issues related to key elements of internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the internet.
- Facilitate discourse between bodies dealing with different cross-cutting international public policies regarding the internet and discuss issues that do not fall within the scope of any existing body.
- Interface with appropriate intergovernmental organisations and other institutions on matters under their purview.
- Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, and in this regard make full use of the expertise of the academic, scientific and technical communities.
- Advise all stakeholders in proposing ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the internet in the developing world.
- Strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future internet governance mechanisms, particularly those from developing countries.
- Identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations.
- Contribute to capacity building for internet governance in developing countries, drawing fully on local sources of knowledge and expertise.
- Promote and assess, on an ongoing basis, the embodiment of WSIS principles in internet governance processes.
- Discuss, *inter alia*, issues relating to critical internet resources.
- Help to find solutions to the issues arising from the use and misuse of the internet, of particular concern to everyday users.
- Publish its proceedings.

The IGF, in its working and function, is required to be multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent.

Consultations on the convening of the IGF were held in Geneva on 16 to 17 February 2006. Around 300 participants representing all stakeholder groups attended the meeting. The participants addressed a wide variety of issues, such as the IGF's scope of work and substantive priorities as well as aspects related to its structure and functioning. The aim of the consultations was to develop a common understanding among all stakeholders on the nature and character of the IGF.

On 17 May 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan established an Advisory Group to assist him in convening the IGF. The Advisory Group is made up of 47 members of government, the private sector and civil society, including the academic and technical communities, representing all regions of the world. It is chaired by Nitin Desai, the Secretary-General's special adviser for the WSIS, assisted by Markus Kummer.

A second round of consultations on the convening of the IGF was held in Geneva on 19 May 2006. The consultations were open to all stakeholders and focused on the substantive preparation of the inaugural meeting of the IGF.

The IGF Advisory Group held a meeting in Geneva on 22 to 23 May 2006. It agreed on recommendations for the agenda and the programme as well as the structure and format of the first meeting in Athens. The Advisory Group recommended that the overall theme of the meeting be "Internet Governance for Development" with the following broad themes:

- Openness – Freedom of expression, free flow of information, ideas and knowledge
- Security – Creating trust and confidence through collaboration
- Diversity – Promoting multilingualism and local content
- Access – Internet connectivity: policy and cost. [9]

The IGF convened for its inaugural meeting in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006.[10]

A number of "dynamic coalitions", based on multi-stakeholder cooperation, emerged from the Athens meeting, including dynamic coalitions on privacy, open standards, spam and an internet bill of rights.[11]

The Government of Brazil will host the 2007 IGF meeting. It will take place in Rio de Janeiro on 12 to 15 November 2007.

Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

The Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)[12] is an African initiative launched by Senegalese President H.E. Abdoulaye Wade during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003) and recognised as a voluntary fund during the second phase (Tunis 2005).[13] It was officially inaugurated on 14 March 2005 in Geneva, in the presence of several heads of state, ministers and mayors. The DSF is supported by 23 founding members consisting of fourteen nation states,[14] eight cities and regions[15] and one international organisation[16] and is governed by a tripartite Foundation Board composed of 24 members, representing, in equal parts, public authorities, the private sector and civil society of the various regions of the world.

The objectives of the DSF are to:

- Ensure affordable and fair access to information technologies (IT) and their contents for everybody, especially marginalised groups.
- Promote such access as a basic right in both the public and private domains, irrespective of market fluctuations, growth and profitability, with respect for an information society that is socially, culturally, economically, financially and ecologically sustainable.
- Guarantee access to information and knowledge to everybody, contribute to the autonomy and healthy development of each individual, and strengthen the commitment of local collectivities at the social, political, economic and cultural levels.

9 See <intgovforum.org/meeting.htm>.

10 See <www.intgovforum.org/IIGF.htm> for transcripts of all the main sessions on the four broad themes.

11 See: <www.intgovforum.org/Dynamic%20Coalitions.php>.

12 <www.dsf-fsn.org>.

13 See paragraph 28 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society: <www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>.

14 Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Burkina Faso, People's Republic of China, Dominican Republic, Republic of France, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Kenya, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Kingdom of Morocco, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Tanzania.

15 City of Dakar (Senegal), City of Geneva (Switzerland), City of Lyon (France), City of Paris (France), City of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Rhône-Alpes Region (France), Basque Country (Spain), Piedmont Region (Italy).

16 Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

- Reduce economic, social and cultural disparities by the mobilisation of fresh resources generated by innovative financial mechanisms for development, in particular the "one percent for digital solidarity" principle,[17] a financing tool specifically devoted to "the fight against the digital divide."[18]

As a financial mechanism, the DSF is not involved in implementing its own in-house projects. Since it does not want to finance large ICT infrastructure, it concentrates on community-based projects with a view to creating new activities, new jobs and, in the long term, new markets.

At present, the DSF is funding a number of pilot projects in Africa which provide ICT and internet access for communities engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Burkina Faso and Burundi. It has also provided IT equipment and capacity-building for the Town Hall of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, which was destroyed by the December 2004 tsunami.

Conclusion

At this point, it is not clear how any of these post-WSIS follow-up and implementation spaces will develop in the years ahead. This overview of activities in 2006 shows that a beginning has been made on all the follow-up and implementation processes specified in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, except for one:

- Developing public policy for the internet through a process towards enhanced cooperation by governments in consultation with all stakeholders, including the development of globally applicable principles on public policy issues associated with the coordination and management of critical internet resources.

The reasons for this omission have not been presented by the UN.

The jury is still out on the value of these various post-WSIS policy spaces. Some of the critical success factors for WSIS implementation are whether the structures established will be able to:

- Attract the participation of a critical mass of all stakeholder groups.
- Manage the power relations between stakeholder groups effectively.
- Leverage existing financial resources and mobilise new financial resources to support implementation activities.
- Rationalise and transform what looks like a cumbersome UN machinery of implementation and monitoring.
- Focus on a limited number of key issues and themes where a significant difference can be made.

Some of the risk factors include:

- Whether the new UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon takes as keen an interest in building a global information society as Kofi Annan did.
- Whether multi-stakeholder partnerships can take hold meaningfully and translate into action.
- Whether there is a sufficient commitment to multilateral approaches to global problems and challenges among stakeholders.
- Whether building a global information society is fully recognised as a global public good, that is worth prioritising.

Of these spaces, the IGF has so far set the standard for creating a space for successful policy dialogue on internet governance. It remains to be seen whether the other post-WSIS spaces can match it in terms of innovation, participation and effectiveness.

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17 The 1% principle requires the inclusion of a digital solidarity clause in all calls for bids for goods or services related to ICTs. The clause states that suppliers responding to these calls for bids undertake to donate 1% of the contract value, deducted from their profit margin, to the DSF.

18 See: <www.dsf-fsn.org/cms/content/view/14/48/lang,en/>.

Post-WSIS mechanisms allowing for NGO inputs

GENEVA SUMMIT / 10-12 December 2003
TUNIS SUMMIT / 16-18 November 2005

New financing mechanism outside of the WSIS process

Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)
<www.dsf-fsn.org>

Inaugurated in Geneva on 14 March 2005, outside of the WSIS process.

WSIS welcomed the DSF as "an innovative financial mechanism" (§ 28, Tunis Agenda).

Initiated in the aftermath of the Geneva Summit on an initiative by the City of Geneva and the President of Senegal, it allows the voluntary commitment of public authorities, including local authorities, and private entities with the view of transforming the "digital divide" into "digital opportunities".

Partnerships with civil society entities.

Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on internet governance

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
<www.intgovforum.org>

WSIS invited the UN Secretary General to convene the IGF for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and clarified its mandate, structure and functions (§ 67 and 72 to 79, Tunis Agenda).

2006:
- *February/March*: Open consultations / Advisory Group meeting (Geneva).
- *30 October-2 November:* Inaugural IGF meeting (Athens).

2007:
- *February:* Advisory Group meeting (Geneva).
- *12-15 November:* 2nd IGF meeting (Rio de Janeiro).

Upcoming:
- **2008**: 3rd IGF meeting (India).
- **2009**: 4th IGF meeting (Egypt).

Implementation at the international level

Multi-stakeholder implementation process
<www.itu.int/wsis/implementation>

WSIS provided for multi-stakeholder implementation at the international level to be moderated/facilitated by UN agencies when appropriate, taking into account the themes and action lines of the Geneva Plan of Action (§ 108 to 110, Tunis Agenda).

2006:
- *February:* Consultation of action line facilitators (Geneva).
- *March:* Action line C2 (Geneva).
- *May:* Action lines: C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, C7-a, C7-b, C7-e, C8, C11 (Geneva).
- *July*: UNGIS launched (Geneva).
- *October:* Action lines: C3, C7-c, C9, C10 (Paris) / Action line C7-h (Beijing).

2007:
- *May:* All WSIS action lines follow-up meetings.

System-wide follow-up to WSIS

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
<stdev.unctad.org>

WSIS requested ECOSOC to review the CSTD to oversee the follow-up to WSIS in a multi-stakeholder approach (§ 105, Tunis Agenda).

2006:
- *February*: ECOSOC consultation on strengthening the CSTD (Geneva).
- *May*: 2nd ECOSOC consultation on the future role of the CSTD / CSTD informal panel on the future role of the CSTD / 9th session of the CSTD (Geneva).
- *July*: ECOSOC resolution on the review of the CSTD mandate and composition (Geneva).

2007:
- *May*: 10th session of the CSTD (Geneva).

UN multi-stakeholder initiatives outside of the WSIS process

UN ICT Task Force
<www.unicttf.org>

Established at the request of ECOSOC in March 2001, the ICTTF is aimed at supporting at the global level the efforts to bridge the digital divide and promote ICT for development.

Terminated in Tunis in November 2005.

Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)
<www.un-gaid.org>

This initiative was intended to replace the UN ICTTF at the end of its mandate. It provides a multi-stakeholder global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue and advocacy and catalyses multi-stakeholder action-oriented partnerships.

2006:
- *19-20 June:* Inaugural meeting of GAID (Kuala Lumpur).

2007:
- *February:* The UN meets Silicon Valley (Santa Clara)
- *March*: First meeting of GAID African Regional Network (Addis Ababa).
- *May*: First GAID Global Forum on Youth / Joint meeting of the CSTD and GAID (Geneva).

Source: The Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO): <www.ngocongo.org>.