

Second Facilitation Meeting on Implementing WSIS Outcomes Related to Action Lines C1 and C7eGov

C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development C7. ICT applications - E-government

Thursday, 24 May 2007, 10:00 – 18:00
Conference Room XXVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
Open to all WSIS Stakeholders

SUMMARY REPORT

Background

1. On 15 and 16 May 2006, DESA facilitated the first Multi-stakeholders Facilitation Meetings on implementing the WSIS outcomes related to Action Lines C1 and C7eGovernment. The objective of the Meetings was to exchange information and discuss possible cooperation modalities among stakeholders for the implementation of the specific Action Lines.
2. In June-July 2006, DESA conducted an online consultation to further discuss the work, the themes and the modalities of the Action Lines' implementation process. Based upon the result of the online consultation among the members of the Network, and in respect of the guidelines set by ITU, the following subgroups were established:

Action Line C1:

- (i) ICT for sustainable development;
- (ii) National e-strategies;
- (iii) ICT in Parliaments;
- (iv) e-Participation; and
- (v) Partnerships.

Action Line C7eGov:

- (i) e-Government strategies;
- (ii) e-Government systems;
- (iii) Measuring e-government; and
- (iv) Knowledge Management.

3. One year after the first Meeting, on the occasion of the Cluster of WSIS-related Events organized around the World Information Society Day, DESA convened the Second Facilitation

Meeting on Action Lines C1 and C7eGov, which was held on 24 May 2007 from 10:00 am to 18:00 pm at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva.

4. The Meeting was open to all stakeholders and was attended by 56 participants, including: 26 representatives from Member States, 20 representatives from UN agencies, regional and international organizations, 6 from the civil society and academia, and 4 from the private sector¹.

5. The Meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of UNDESA, and a keynote address was made by Mr. Sha Zukang, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Head of the Chinese Delegation to the Cluster of WSIS-Related Events in Geneva 2007, and designated Under-Secretary-General of UNDESA. Ms. Haiyan Qian, Chief of the Knowledge Management Branch of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of UNDESA assisted in the facilitation of the meeting.

Opening

6. Mr. Civili began his opening remarks by indicating the main purpose of this Second Facilitation Meeting: To take stock of the progress made since last year by all stakeholders in relation to Action Lines C1 and C7eGov, and to identify promising approaches and key issues that need to be addressed for further implementation.

He expressed the wish that this meeting would be used to share and analyse the many acquired experiences and translate them into still more effective and coherent actions. Valuable lessons could emerge both as good practices as well as approaches to obstacles that need to be overcome to enhance synergies among all stakeholders, within and across action lines, to advance the vision and concrete agenda set by the WSIS.

He concluded by highlighting how the role of DESA, as Facilitator of the WSIS Action Lines, is an integral part of the UN overall effort to advance international cooperation and development.

7. In his speech, Mr. Sha underlined how the information age is having a dramatic impact on governance, and how governments worldwide are undergoing a re-engineering process known as "government reinvention". In this process, he said, ICTs can play an important role as a powerful tool for both economic and social development, allowing governments to improve efficiency and to deliver more transparent, high-quality services to citizens.

Successful governance in this knowledge economy will require the effective management of information and knowledge assets, IT planning and e-government activities. A government's role in bridging the digital divide and providing access to all is paramount. But governments alone cannot bear the burden of transforming their societies into information societies. There is a clear need for multi-stakeholder engagement. The success of nations, therefore, depends, to a great extent, on comprehensive and coordinated frameworks with all stakeholders.

¹ A complete list of participants is to be found at:
<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan026366.pdf>

Mr. Sha closed his remarks stating how an event such this one provides the opportunity for reflection and discussion, which hopefully will generate some innovative thinking on the use of technology for achieving sustainability, and he suggested the discussion be guided by the idea that *"ICTs improve global collaboration, but global collaboration also improves ICTs"*.

Presentations on progress, projects and initiatives

8. After the opening, Ms. Qian began the reporting session by presenting DESA's global activities related to Action Line C1 and Action Line C7eGov.

9. 7. In its role as facilitator for ALs C1 and C7eGov, DESA's efforts during the last 12 months focused on:

- a) the identification of the priority areas for implementation within the two Action Lines;
- b) the development of global information and databases; and
- c) the creation of synergies among different stakeholders.

In particular:

- I. Online consultations building on the findings and recommendations of the First Facilitation Meeting have served to identify the subgroups for ALs C1 and C7eGov, and to better customize the ITU-supported Stocktaking Database where a total of 1,283 inputs were entered for C1 (977 contributed under the general group, and 306 under the established sub-groups) and 261 for C7eGov (91 under the general group, and 170 under the sub-groups established)².
- II. With respect to the information databases, given the importance of e-government as a tool to meet the Millennium Development Goals, DESA has established the Global e-Government Readiness Knowledge Base³ and developed a Global Compendium of Innovative Practices in e-Government⁴, all accessible online. The Compendium has until now been produced internally by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, but the Division plans, in a second stage, to solicit the inputs and participation of other stakeholders in building these databases.
- III. With regard to synergies among different stakeholders, a dedicated online platform to facilitate network activities has been created: A number of networks have been established; a mailing list of key stakeholders has been built, which comprises some 2,000 names; a website dedicated to the facilitation of the implementation of Action Lines C1 and C7 has been created within UNPAN⁵ - the United Nations Public Administration Network Portal; and an online discussion facility was built for the two Action Lines and each of the subgroups.

² <http://www.unpan.org/post-WSIS-int.asp>

³ <http://www.unpan.org/egovkb/index.aspx>

⁴ <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN023997.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.unpan.org/post-WSIS-C1-C7home.asp>

- IV. The E-governance Community of Experts has been established, which works closely with the Action Lines' network promoting the exchange of experiences, the sharing of knowledge and the building of partnerships.

More at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan026173.pdf>

10. Presentations on the activities and on the mission of the respective organizations were made for each sub-group by the following participants, who also proposed themselves as possible focal points for the specific sub-group:

Reports on activities related to Sub-groups of Action Line C1:

1. Sub-group on "ICT for sustainable development"
2. Sub-group on "National e-strategies"
3. Sub-group on "ICT in Parliaments"
Mr. Gherardo Casini, Head, UN/DESA Office in Rome
4. Sub-group on "e-Participation"
Mats Lindberg, Project Officer, "Good Governance in the Information Society", Directorate General of Political Affairs, Council of Europe
5. Sub-group on "Partnership" *Mr. Randy Ramusack, UN Technology and Policy Adviser, Microsoft Corporation*

Reports on activities related to Sub-groups of Action Line C7 – eGovernment:

1. Sub-group on "e-Government strategies"
Dr. Antonio Cordella, Lecturer in Information Systems, London School of Economics
2. Sub-group on "e-Government systems"
Frank Grozel, UNCTAD
3. Sub-group on "Measuring e-government"
4. Sub-group on "Knowledge management"
Professor Liu Chuang, Leading Professor of Global Change, Information and Research Centre, Chinese Academy of Sciences

11. Mr. Gherardo Casini, the Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament, a joint initiative of DESA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, reported on the activities related to the Sub-group on ICT and Parliament.

Mr. Casini stated that the objectives and role of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament are key ingredients of the work of the sub-group on ICT and Parliaments, since its goals coincide with the purpose of this sub-group, and the group intends to rely on the Centre to further advance the stakeholders' common agenda.

He further explained that, following the first consultation meeting of Action Line C1 in May 2006 and the subsequent establishment of the sub-group on ICT and Parliaments, the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament started to map partners, initiatives, documentation and collaborative efforts in two specific areas of work:

(a) parliaments' role in the promotion of the Information Society; and

(b) applications of ICT tools for the modernization of parliamentary processes (e-parliament), including inter-parliamentary cooperation.

In addition, a comprehensive portal was established in October 2006 (www.ictparliament.org) and its content has progressively been enriched with the help of parliamentary institutions and partners worldwide. The portal now features ICT-related legislation, studies, analyses, best practices, videos and links to major activities around the world, organized by regional nodes.

Mr. Casini invited the participants interested in the Sub-group on ICT and Parliaments to join its first official meeting, taking place around the theme "Parliaments in the Information Age" as a parallel event to this Second Facilitation Meeting on AL C1.

He concluded by expressing his hope that this meeting would shed some light on these critical efforts and that, by dedicating its final session to the coordination of donor-funded activities and those of parliament to parliament, this sub-group can feel that a positive step has been added to the common path.

More at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan026264.pdf>

12. Mr. Mats Lindbergh, representative of the Council of Europe, spoke on the Council's activities. The Council of Europe established an *ad hoc* committee on e-democracy focusing on transparency in the decision-making process and on e-participation. The Committee is expected to analyse what e-democracy is, or could be, and how the use of ICTs can bring support to the democratic processes. The final aim of the work is to produce a report and a toolkit with a collection of good practices from Member States in e-democracy and e-participation, also providing precise and complete information on the technological solution used in order for the experiences to be transferred. In addition, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on E-governance.

The representative of the Council of Europe proposed to have a leading role in cooperating with DESA in all activities related to the sub-group on e-participation (e.g., the establishment of a database/stocktaking on initiatives on e-democracy and e-participation).

13. Mr. Randy Ramusack of Microsoft introduced Microsoft's activities. Microsoft is currently working on a Program on security: one on learning, and one focusing on helping governments to build e-government strategies and initiatives.

In relation to the issues relevant to the sub-group on partnership, Mr. Ramusack suggested that the network should share ideas and information on experiences of partnership with the private sector, with the goal of returning to this Meeting in 2008 to report on what has happened in terms of partnerships. He also drew attention to the fact that the provision of assistance in establishing the architecture/framework connecting governments and the facilitation of partnerships are areas where this group can actually become a real working group, leading to the achievement of concrete results.

He also proposed that perhaps in the upcoming six months, a specific network of stakeholders interested in PP partnerships could be established.

14. Professor Liu Chuang of the "Information and Research Centre" (Chinese Academy of Sciences) indicated that the Centre has built a databank and established networks, but they need help from the governments and the private sector on how to put these projects into action.

In view of the above, she proposed to have an active role with regard to the work conducted by this network in the area of Knowledge Management.

15. In relation to the work that could be conducted by the sub-group on e-government strategies, Professor Antonio Cordella emphasized the importance of reflecting on the following issues:

The bureaucracies should be thought of as being at the centre of the modern democracies. In relation to this, the technology can be seen as an effective tool in making the bureaucratic institutions more effective and efficient in delivering services to its citizens. This service delivery approach is one of the pillars of the democratic state, and ICTs can be essential in support of those governments that want to deliver services effectively and efficiently to their citizens.

Professor Cordella emphasized that we should think of the process of reform of public administration as supported by IT. If we look at IT as a tool to leverage the capability of a state to be more effective, and as a tool to help the state in delivering better services, it is more likely that we will also appropriately address the issue of the “digital divide”, which is deeply embedded in the problem of delivering services to citizens.

Professor Cordella continued pointing out how, with regard to the work conducted in relation to the development, implementation and assessment of an e-government strategy, too often we are not focusing on the basic issue, i.e., What does the government want to do with the ICT? We should look first at the goal of a national development strategy; this would allow us to place IT in the right position and could eventually even lead us to reassess the idea of using IT as the best means to achieving the national development goals.

He stated that we should focus on what the state wants to achieve, and on how IT can help the government achieve those goals. The government needs, at first, to define the political goals it wants to reach, which are the goals set in the public policies adopted. This would probably enable us to better assess the “e-government strategies”.

We should, thus, shift from the use of the word “e-government” to the expression “the use of ICT to achieve a government’s goals”. If the use of IT makes the delivery of services more efficient for some, but not for others, we are creating a digital gap/divide, which endangers the fundamentals of a democracy; therefore, IT should not come first and guide the decisions of a government, but it should be seen as a tool to implement the government’s decisions.

16. A specific proposal came from Mr. Daniel Stauffacher, the Executive Director of the “ICT for Peace Foundation”, previously the Swiss Ambassador for WSIS, who expressed his appreciation for the fact that the WSIS has helped recognize the role of ICT, **and indicated that the “ICT for Peace Foundation” is willing to cooperate in the implementation of the AL C1 “Sub-group ICT for Sustainable Development.”**

17. Mr. Jaroslaw K. Ponder, from the ITU, provided an extensive presentation of the stocktaking database of WSIS-related implementation activities, which should serve as an effective tool for information exchange on initiatives fostering the development of the information society within the framework of the 11 WSIS Action Lines. He invited DESA, as facilitator of WSIS Action Lines to use the tool and encouraged all stakeholders to add information to the database on relevant activities under each Action Line.

18. After the presentations the floor was opened for participants to report on the activities of their respective organizations, or make comments on key issues in relation to the single sub-groups.

The following comments were expressed by various stakeholders participating in the meeting:

- a. The importance of measuring the impact in order to better understand where the gaps are and to decide how to better invest the financial resources available.
- b. The importance of working on the issue of e-voting, which is a key question for e-democracy.
- c. The need to cooperate with the private sector to identify holistic and across-the-board solutions; and to identify countries that, having similar needs, might be willing and interested in cooperating in the development and adoption of applications/solutions. This would lead to the development of systems that can be deployed in a number of countries. We should, therefore, opt for having regional groups instead of concentrating the efforts at the national level.
- d. The cooperation and partnerships between the private sector and the governments should go beyond the personal relationship, and be extended to many areas and sectors. In several countries, unfortunately, the problem remains the fact that the personal relation is the ground for any cooperation between the government and the private sector so that the initiatives are based on a one-one type of approach.
- e. The need to focus on e-inclusion: A primary issue is how quickly we can make it available to as many people as possible. The UN should help developing countries to diffuse the technologies to as many people as possible, in as many countries as possible.
- f. The experience of many regions, including the Caribbean, led to the conclusion that it makes more sense to work together as a region, instead of acting at the national level.
- g. The private-public partnership has to work concretely, and move from the policy dialogue to concrete results. In fact, the policy dialogue should be targeting concrete results. This is a critical moment of challenge and also of opportunities, since there is great enthusiasm for issues related to e-government.
- h. The information already in the WSIS stocktaking database should be used to analyse some existing practices or projects, to identify initiatives and to establish contacts. This would facilitate the sharing of information and resources, and would allow avoiding duplication.
- i. There is still much confusion between the concepts of e-government and e-governance, and this network could focus on the provision of such clarification.

Areas of discussion and specific proposals

19. Several important points came across from the interactive discussion:

- a. The issue of the reporting modalities needs to be clarified: it is obvious that in order to perform their mandates given by the WSIS and subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, both CSTD and UNGIS need information on relevant activities of participating stakeholders. The challenge is how to organize an effective and comprehensive information flow within the existing organizational and legislative frameworks.

- b. The interaction in the framework of the WSIS Action Lines must not be a process for the sake of process. The stocktaking, or mapping, of existing activities is the first step to be taken by the network, and such an effort should be capitalized to advance concrete steps and lead to concrete results through partnerships among different stakeholders.
- c. It was pointed out that although the Action Lines system was a good idea to start the WSIS implementation phase, the main task and challenge for all facilitators and partners is now to avoid the single Action Lines becoming compartmentalized and functioning isolation. For instance, a message on policy orientation that emerges in relation to one Action Line should be shared with other Action Lines.
- d. This Second Facilitation Meeting should identify a main focal point for each of the sub-groups of Action Lines C1 and C7eGov. The role of the focal points should be to take the lead to formalize and guide the work of the sub-groups to make it advance towards concrete steps in-between the physical sessions.
- e. The group agreed to develop a matrix with thematic focus areas of the various UN Agencies in relation to the Action Lines facilitated by DESA.
- f. The group also agreed to develop a database on practices of public and private partnership in ICT for development.
- g. As a result of the discussion the sub-group of C1 "ICT for Sustainable Development" was changed to "ICT for Sustainable Development and Peace."

Final comments

20. The Chairperson concluded by recognizing the achievement of the initial goals of this Second Facilitation Meeting, which represented a moment of observation, reflection and assessment of the work done on the implementation of the Action Lines. Informative and valuable presentations on the activities of the stakeholders were presented, as well as the problems and challenges encountered in their work.

He continued underlying how the network has made reasonable progress since the First Facilitation Meeting that was held in May 2006, and has facilitated an enriching exchange of experiences and views. The Network is, therefore, in a better position to see the "big picture", to understand how its work can contribute to the overall process of implementation of WSIS outcomes, and what, together and individually, needs to be done to make the development impact of the work even more tangible.

He concluded by stating that the challenges the UN faces in harmonizing the work of diverse UN entities in the implementation of a summit's outcomes are familiar, and the United Nations family has been continuously refining its coordination mechanisms and modalities. What is new and even unique for the WSIS implementation and follow-up is the broad engagement of non-governmental stakeholders and partners. This elevates the need for innovative, effective, and sustainable modalities of coordination, information exchange and managing partnerships to a qualitatively new level, and discussions such as the one held during this meeting can help identify approaches and tools that would be adequate for the challenge.