Understanding the WSIS+10 Review Process

The United Nations and its 10-year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2015

MAY 2015

Internet Society

2015: Year of the UN-wide WSIS+10 Review

The original WSIS: ICTs, development and bridging the global digital divide

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was the first major UN-sponsored event to discuss the implications of the emerging information society. In 1998, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) passed a resolution[1] calling on the UN to convene a summit of world leaders to develop the emerging information society and utilize Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to bridge the global development divide. WSIS was held in two phases, in Geneva (2002) and Tunis (2005), with preparatory processes preceding both phases. WSIS developed a set of 11 goals, or "Action Lines", to achieve the overall aim of building an inclusive Information Society.

In December 2015, the United Nations General Assembly will review whether sufficient progress has been made to achieving the WSIS goals over the past 10 years and will consider the future of the WSIS process beyond 2015.

Reviewing the impact of WSIS and looking beyond 2015

In 2005, through the Tunis Agenda on the Information Society, UN Member States requested that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015. As part of the request, the Tunis Agenda explicitly noted that the WSIS Action Plan was intended to initiate follow-on activities in support of the MDGs.[2]

As a result, a WSIS+10 Review High Level Meeting will be held during the UNGA's session in December 2015. The goal will be to review the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and provide a vision on what a post-2015 WSIS agenda may look like.

Key issues to be discussed in the UNGA WSIS+10 Review

The exact scope of the Review remains to be defined, and governments are expected to bring a range of issues to the table, including security, human rights, and development-related issues to enable greater access to ICTs. At a minimum, it is expected that the discussion will focus on the following issues:

- **Internet governance:** Overall a discussion on the benefits and challenges of the multistakeholder approach in implementing the WSIS Action Lines is expected. In this context, the renewal of the mandate of the IGF will be discussed. Its ability to produce useful policy outputs in November, such as best practices, will impact these discussions. The notion of "*enhanced cooperation*" (paragraph 69, Tunis Agenda) will also be addressed. At the heart of the issue are very different views on whether "*enhanced cooperation*" is specifically about enhancing the role of governments in Internet governance, or whether it is about enhancing cooperation between all stakeholders, including governments.

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1 http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/73.html
2 http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html, paragraph 11

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- **The role of ICTs in development:** This year's final WSIS+10 review takes place shortly after the United Nations Summit in New York on 25-27 September 2015 that will set out a Post-2015 Development Agenda.[3] Many stakeholders are looking forward to more recognition of the benefits that ICTs can play in development in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the Summit.[4] In terms of the WSIS+10 Review itself, many stakeholders are hoping that it can address some of the perceived failures to fully achieve development-related WSIS goals over the past decade.

- **Privacy, Security and Human Rights:** In the past years, the conversations about the Internet have gravitated around issues of trust. In the aftermath of disclosures on pervasive surveillance, the UN General Assembly adopted resolutions in 2013 and 2014 on the right to privacy in the digital age, which have been carried further at the U.N. Human Rights Council. This sent a clear message to the international community that the right to privacy applies online as well as offline. Negotiations around references to human rights (including also freedom of expression) and their application in the online environment have been very present in the WSIS+10 preparatory process and are likely to stay on the agenda until December. More recently, the Global Conference on CyberSpace in the Hague re-emphasized the recognition that governments cannot alone address the security issue, and that inclusion of all sectors in a collaborative spirit is essential. It remains to be seen if this approach will be reflected in the outcomes of the WSIS+10 review in December.

Preparations for the 10-year review

Two of the lead UN agencies identified to implement the Tunis Action Plan are the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The UN's Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) also has a key role, having been tasked with assisting the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as the focal point for the system-wide follow-up of WSIS.[5] These UN bodies have been collaborating with others on a series of events intended to fulfill the requirement of the final UN-wide review:

- **UNESCO**, in collaboration with the ITU and other UN agencies, held the first WSIS+10 event in Paris in early 2013.[6]. The multistakeholder outcome document from the meeting that now forms an input to UNGA WSIS+10 Review is:

  "*Information and Knowledge for All: An Expanded Vision and a Renewed Commitment*"[7]

- The **ITU**, in collaboration with UNESCO and other UN agencies, hosted a WSIS+10 High-Level Event from 9 to 13 June 2014 in Geneva.[8] A multistakeholder preparatory

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3 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit
4 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal
5 http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2006/resolution%202006-46.pdf
6 http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/unesco-and-wsis/wsis-10-review-meeting/
7 http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS_10_Event/wsis10_final_statement_en.pdf
8 http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/2013.html#

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process was used to draft the two outcome documents of the event that form another set of input documents for the UNGA WSIS+10 Review:

"*WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes*"[9]
"*WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015*"[10]

- During 2014, the **CSTD** collected inputs from all WSIS Action Line facilitators and stakeholders about the progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes.[11] The results were collated into a final report, which was presented at the CSTD's 18th Session in May 2015, and then presented to the UNGA:

"*Implementing WSIS outcomes: A ten-year review*"[12]

All three processes have been open to contributions from all stakeholders in the WSIS process. Collectively, these preparatory activities in the lead-up to the final UNGA WSIS+10 review are known as the "WSIS+10 process".

UNGA WSIS+10 High Level Meeting in December 2015

The UNGA passed a resolution[13] on the general modalities of the two-day High Level Meeting to be held in December 2015. Following this resolution:

- The President of the UNGA will appoint, in June 2015, two co-facilitators that will organize the modalities of the preparatory process.
- Consultations with all relevant stakeholders of the WSIS will be organized. Inputs from these consultations will be fed into the intergovernmental negotiation process.
- Ultimately, the outcome document will be adopted at the High Level Meeting, in an intergovernmental fashion.

Key events to follow in the lead-up to the UNGA WSIS+10 High Level Meeting

Before the UNGA preparatory process begins, there are key events to follow:

- **ITU WSIS Forum**: The WSIS Forum 2015, to be held 25-29 May 2015, is to discuss possible linkages between WSIS Action Lines and UN Sustainable Development Goals as a vision for WSIS beyond 2015.

- **IGF 2015**, 10-13 November 2015, Brazil: The tenth edition of the IGF may hold multistakeholder discussions on the WSIS+10 review and potentially some form of output to be forwarded to the UNGA preparatory process.

- **Information on other Internet governance discussions of relevance:** There are many more forums where Internet governance is being discussed in 2015 than could have been imagined in 2002, before the start of the WSIS process. The Internet Society

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9 http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/inc/docs/final/wsis10.statement.docx
10 http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/inc/docs/final/wsis10.vision.r1.docx
11 http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WSIS-10yearReview.aspx
12 http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlstict2015d3_en.pdf
13 http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/302

maintains a timeline of Internet governance events on its web site.[14] Several civil society organizations also have joined to publish a useful calendar of Internet governance related events in the WSIS process.[15]

The Internet Society and the WSIS+10 Review

As one of the organizations involved in the WSIS since its inception, the Internet Society is following the process closely and participating to the greatest extent possible. In particular, the Internet Society is:

- Gathering information and sharing with its members and community

- Planning a series of outreach sessions in collaboration with other stakeholders in the lead-up to the December event

For more information, please visit the Internet Society's website[16].

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14 http://www.internetsociety.org/igtimeline
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