

2009/7

Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,¹

Recognizing the efforts by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes of the two phases of the World Summit, while recognizing also the efforts of the United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations in facilitating activities among different stakeholders,

Recalling the agreements by which the United Nations recognized various organizations as specialized agencies within the United Nations system,

Recalling also the relevant resolutions founding the United Nations programmes,

Recalling further its resolution 2006/46 of 28 July 2006 on the follow-up to the World Summit and the review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and the mandate that it gave to the Commission,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 61/16 of 20 November 2006 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling also its resolutions 2007/8 of 25 July 2007 on the flow of information for the follow-up to the World Summit and 2008/3 of 18 July 2008 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 63/202 of 19 December 2008 on information and communications technologies for development,

Noting the outcomes of the intersessional panel meeting of the Commission, held in Santiago from 12 to 14 November 2008 and the report prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,²

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,³

Taking note of the respective reports of the Council of Europe, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, the Internet Governance Forum, the International Trade Centre of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Universal Postal Union, the World Health Organization, the

¹ See A/C.2/59/3, annex, and A/60/687; the outcome documents are also available at www.itu.int/WSIS/index.html.

² E/CN.16/2009/CRP.1.

³ A/64/64-E/2009/10.

World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, which were used as inputs to the report of the Secretary-General,

Taking stock: reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

1. *Reaffirms* that information and communications technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges;

2. *Recognizes* that the economic downturn has led to a slowdown in investment, but at the same time notes the resilience of the information and communications technology sectors and their potential contribution to speeding up global economic recovery;

3. *Notes* that while the digital divide may be shrinking in some areas, many challenges remain with large disparities still existing in terms of access to information and communications technologies and knowledge, penetration and affordability, both between developed and developing countries and within countries and regions and, moreover, new forms of the digital divide are emerging regarding broadband and local digital content;

4. *Stresses* the need to bridge the digital divide and to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, are available to all, a need that poses a challenge for many countries, which are forced to choose between many competing objectives in their development planning and in demands for development funds, while having limited resources;

5. *Notes with dissatisfaction* that, for the majority of the poor, the developmental promise of science and technology, including information and communications technologies, remains unfulfilled, and emphasizes the need to effectively harness technology, including information and communications technologies, to bridge the digital divide;

6. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as insufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity and issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and transfer of technology to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries;

7. *Notes* that considerable efforts were undertaken and progress was made in 2008 towards the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and that numerous activities have been reported by the different entities of the United Nations system, although various relevant activities by non-governmental actors were not reflected by the reporting mechanism in place;

8. *Takes note* of the respective reports of many United Nations entities, with their own executive summaries, submitted as inputs for the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and published on the website of the Commission, as mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2007/8;

9. *Notes* the holding of the cluster of events related to the World Summit in an improved format, renamed as World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2009, organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to facilitate the implementation of the

World Summit action lines, and notes that the inclusiveness, interactivity and depth of the discussions of the Forum on the implementation of the action lines in a multi-stakeholder framework can be further enhanced;

10. *Recalls* the importance of close coordination among the leading action line facilitators and with the secretariat of the Commission;

11. *Notes* the results of the meeting on 22 May 2009 of the United Nations Group on the Information Society, which agreed, inter alia, to carry out an open consultation on financial mechanisms, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2008/3, and highlights the role of the Group in facilitating the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit under the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination as requested of the Secretary-General in paragraph 103 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society;⁴

12. *Calls upon* international and regional organizations to assess and report on a regular basis on the universal accessibility of nations to information and communications technologies, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of the information and communications technology sectors of developing countries;

13. *Notes with regret* that more than three years after the second phase of the World Summit, held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, the revised guidelines for United Nations country teams on preparing common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Framework still do not reflect the recommendations of the outcome documents of the Summit and do not contain a component on information and communications technology for development, and urges that the necessary coordinated action be taken for implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 100 of the Tunis Agenda;

14. *Reaffirms* the principles enunciated in the World Summit that the Internet has evolved into a global facility available to the public, that its governance should constitute a core issue of the information society agenda and that the international management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations and should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all and ensure a stable and secure functioning of the Internet, taking into account multilingualism;

15. *Notes* the discussions in the Internet Governance Forum as a multi-stakeholder platform on public policy issues related to Internet governance, which were reflected by the Secretary-General in his report, expresses appreciation for the work done by the Chair, the secretariat and the host Governments of the Forum, and looks forward to the convening of the fourth meeting of the Forum, in Egypt in November 2009;

16. *Encourages* all stakeholders to contribute to the online consultations regarding the “desirability of the continuation” of the Internet Governance Forum, as envisaged in paragraph 76 of the Tunis Agenda, taking into consideration the stakeholders in developing areas that have been unable to get connected online, and urges the Secretary-General to take all appropriate measures to have broad-based consultations;

17. *Notes* that paragraph 80 of the Tunis Agenda refers to development of multi-stakeholder processes at the national, regional and international levels;

18. *Recognizes* the contribution of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly 2008 towards enhanced cooperation;

⁴ See A/60/687.

19. *Notes* the conclusion of the Secretary-General on the basis of performance reports from ten organizations relevant to Internet governance that, while the efforts made varied in nature among the organizations, the performance reports suggest that the call in the Tunis Agenda for enhanced cooperation has been taken seriously by these organizations, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council through the Commission on the progress made towards enhanced cooperation;

20. *Notes* that topics that were not central at the first and second phases of the World Summit in 2003 and 2005 continue to emerge, such as the potential of information and communications technologies to combat climate change, the protection of online privacy and the empowerment and protection, particularly against cyberexploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;

21. *Notes* that a rising level of Internet penetration alone does not necessarily guarantee an information society for all, and that the information society requires complementary efforts and funds to make access affordable and develop skills to make use of the services and equipment and develop local content;

22. *Notes* the contribution of the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development to the twelfth session of the Commission;

23. *Welcomes* the efforts undertaken by Tunisia, host of the second phase of the World Summit, to organize annually the ICT4All Forum and technological exhibition as a platform to promote a dynamic business environment for the information and communications technology sector worldwide;

24. *Calls upon* all States, in building the information society, to take steps with a view to avoiding, and to refrain from taking, any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of affected countries and that hinders their well-being;

The road ahead

25. *Encourages* all stakeholders to continue their efforts to implement the World Summit vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society so as to enhance digital opportunities for all people in order to help to bridge the digital divide;

26. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to assist developing countries in their efforts towards narrowing the digital divide, particularly with regard to access, affordability, speed in broadband, local content and data privacy;

27. *Encourages* all stakeholders to continue to cooperate on and to develop information and communications technology partnerships towards capacity-building, transfer of technology and knowledge, and research and development;

28. *Recognizes* the work of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development, its institutional strengthening and the creation of the working group to measure the economic and social impact of information and communications technologies, recalls Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/3, in which the Council acknowledged the work of the Partnership to develop indicators, and recommends that the Partnership consider the creation of benchmarks and impact indicators for further consideration by the United Nations Statistical Commission;

29. *Notes* the efforts made in developing tools to assess the global digital divide, including, inter alia, the International Telecommunication Union Information and Communication Technology Development Index;

30. *Encourages* all stakeholders to continue to focus on pro-poor information and communications technology policies and applications, including the need for access to broadband at the grass-roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divide between and within countries;

31. *Encourages* all stakeholders to increase efforts to implement the information and communications technology accessibility concept as contained in article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;⁵

32. *Calls* on all stakeholders, in the interest of future generations, to give due attention to digital preservation, and commends the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its partners for their work on the World Digital Library, which was inaugurated on 21 April 2009;

33. *Takes note* of the importance of efforts to reduce the environmental effects of the information and communications technology sector and at the same time of the potential of information and communications technologies to reduce environmental impacts in other sectors;

34. *Recognizes* the importance of continuing efforts at the national and international levels to address privacy and security concerns in the use of information and communications technology, and encourages Governments, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to develop effective approaches in this regard;

35. *Urges* the United Nations entities still not actively cooperating in the World Summit implementation through the United Nations system and its follow-up to take the necessary steps and commit to a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society and to catalyse the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;⁶

36. *Encourages* the World Summit action line facilitators to increase their efforts to include all stakeholders in the facilitation process on implementing the World Summit action lines and to further enhance the interactivity of the process;

37. *Encourages* the regional commissions to continue to share best practices among themselves to improve the overall implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit;

38. *Encourages* all relevant United Nations entities, including the regional commissions, to support the development and implementation of national e-strategies in developing and least developed countries, while encouraging international collaboration, especially South-South cooperation and North-South partnerships, for determining best practices and sharing experiences and resources;

39. *Takes note* of action line C7 of the World Summit on e-health and the Millennium Development Goals related to health, as well as the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review theme for 2009, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health";

40. *Encourages* Governments to strive to use information and communications technology to achieve the health-related internationally agreed development goals by increasing multi-stakeholder coordinated efforts at the national and international levels;

⁵ General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

⁶ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

41. *Encourages* the development of identified national health priorities, a national e-health policy and strategy that brings together the health and information and communications technology sectors to articulate information and communications technology implementation policies and plans for public health;

42. *Encourages* the World Health Organization, the International Telecommunication Union and other United Nations agencies and bodies to coordinate their activities and work closely with relevant stakeholders to develop guidelines for data exchange, which is essential to the successful implementation of health information and communications technology applications and the infrastructure that supports them;

43. *Invites* the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to support the review and assessment work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development regarding follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society;

44. *Recommends* mainstreaming information and communications technologies in the economy as a driver of growth and sustainable development and encourages all stakeholders to continue engaging in people-centred partnerships as an effective way forward;

45. *Encourages* collaboration of the World Summit action line facilitators and moderators concerning action lines C3, access to information and knowledge, C7, e-science, and C7, e-health, with the Commission in the context of its traditional mandate;

46. *Requests* the Commission, during its thirteenth session, which will be held at the half-way point to the 2015 overall review, to organize a substantive discussion on the five-year progress made in the implementation of the World Summit outcomes, including consideration of the modalities of implementation and follow-up to the World Summit, and invites all facilitators and stakeholders to take this into account with regard to their contribution to that session;

47. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission, an executive summary on the implementation of the World Summit outcomes by each United Nations agency and programme;

48. *Urges* all United Nations bodies to contribute to the executive summary mentioned in paragraph 47 above, listing the decisions and resolutions of their relevant organs as well as their relevant plans and activities;

49. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on a yearly basis, a report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Economic and Social Council resolutions on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

*36th plenary meeting
24 July 2009*