United Nations A/70/63–E/2015/10

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2015

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Item 17 of the preliminary list*
Information and communication technologies for development

Economic and Social Council
2015 session
21 July 2014–22 July 2015
Item 18 (b) of the provisional agenda**
Economic and environmental questions: Science and technology for development

Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels

Report of the Secretary-General

Executive summary

This report has been prepared in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, for the United Nations Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) concerning the implementation of outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It reviews progress at the international and regional levels, and identifies obstacles and constraints encountered. It has been prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) secretariat based on information provided by entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts during 2014 to implement WSIS outcomes, with a view to sharing effective practices and lessons learned.

* A/70/50.

** A/70/65-E/2015/48.

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Introduction

1. This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/46. It includes information provided by 27 United Nations and other international organizations and stakeholders,[1] responding to a letter from the Secretary-General of UNCTAD which invited contributions concerning trends, achievements and obstacles in the implementation of WSIS outcomes. It focuses on major initiatives undertaken during 2014.

I. Key trends

A. Digital opportunity and digital divide

2. There has been continued growth in adoption and use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in both developed and developing countries. Data published by the Partnership on Measuring ICTs for Development, in its *Final WSIS Targets Review*, show that over 90 per cent of the world's population is now covered by mobile networks. The number of mobile subscriptions is almost equal to the world's population. Almost 50 per cent of the world's people are estimated to be subscribers, while some 44 per cent of households are estimated to have Internet access and some 39 per cent of people, to be Internet users. The WSIS target that half the world's population should have access to ICTs within their reach and make use of them should be achieved, the Partnership suggests, by the end of 2016.[2]

3. However, data published by the Partnership also show continued digital divides between developed and developing countries. While 78 per cent of households in developed countries have Internet access, only 5 per cent in the least developed countries do so. Fixed and mobile broadband connections are much more widely available, and more affordable, in developed than developing countries. Rural areas in many countries still have little broadband access. As a result, there is a risk that digital divides will grow and developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, will fail to derive full benefits from the information society.[3]

[1] Council of Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Governance Forum (IGF), International Trade Centre, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UNCTAD, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization, World Trade Organization, Association for Progressive Communications, Deutsche Telekom, End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, Internet Society, Telefónica and Verizon. For these contributions, see www.unctad.org/cstd.

[2] http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/wsisreview2014/WSIS2014_review.pdf and http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2014/MIS2014_without_Annex_4.pdf.

[3] http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2014/MIS2014_without_Annex_4.pdf.

B. The evolving Internet

4. Rapid change continues to take place in technology, services and governance on the Internet. Social networks and interactive web services have extended their reach into society, enabling users to publish views and access wider content. Internet traffic is increasingly dominated by video content and by the movement of data and applications from users' hardware to the cloud. There has been increased debate concerning online privacy and surveillance.

5. ICANN invited applications for new global top-level domains in 2012, receiving 1,932 applications by June 2014, of which 116 were for internationalized domain names. By December 2014, 469 new global top-level domains had been introduced. ICANN has established a Stewardship Transition Coordinating Group under the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) to develop proposals concerning administration of the IANA function, following announcement by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the United States of America that it intends this to be transferred to the global multi-stakeholder community.[4]

6. Discussions concerning the future of Internet governance have taken place in United Nations and other forums, including the Internet Governance Forum and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. The General Assembly noted the hosting of the Global Multi-stakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance, known as NETmundial, by the Government of Brazil in April 2014.[5] UNESCO launched a comprehensive study of Internet-related issues, the outcomes of which will be reported to its General Conference in 2015.[6] The World Bank is preparing its 2016 *World Development Report* on Internet for development.[7]

C. Rapid developments in technology, services and applications

7. The rapid pace of change in ICT leads to the continuous introduction of new services and new opportunities for development applications. It has been estimated that the capabilities of ICT networks and services are now 30 times greater than at the time of WSIS, and that they will continue to grow as rapidly.[8]

8. Four developments, in particular, are impacting substantially on Governments, businesses and consumers. The introduction of smartphones and tablets has shifted individual and organizational computing towards more flexible mobile devices. Individuals, businesses and Governments are moving data and applications towards the cloud and cloud-based services. The datafication of government and business activity and the resources of cloud-based data management are enabling more extensive use of big data analysis and open data. The emerging "Internet of things", connecting devices as well as people to the Internet, will greatly expand the data available to enhance development opportunities.[9]

9. These developments also pose substantial challenges. Increased data traffic puts pressure on radio spectrum and increases the need for transition to what the ITU calls new

[4] https://www.icann.org/stewardship/coordination-group.
[5] A/RES/69/204; see also http://netmundial.br/.
[6] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/internetstudy.
[7] http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTNWDR2013/0,,contentMDK:23615285~pagePK:8258258~piPK:8258412~theSitePK:8258025,00.html.
[8] http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162014d3_en.pdf.
[9] http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162014d3_en.pdf.

regulations paradigms – a "fourth-generation regulation" – that respond to the recent dynamic changes in ICTs and markets.[10] Changes are required in national legislation and international commerce to accommodate electronic transactions and prepare for further innovations, while datafication and cloud computing raise concerns over data protection, privacy and data sovereignty.

D. The information society and the post-2015 development agenda

10. As well as reviewing implementation of WSIS outcomes, the General Assembly will in 2015 review the Millennium Development Goals, establish new sustainable development goals and agree the post-2015 development agenda which will guide international development policy and practice until 2030. Preparations for the sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda have been under way for the past two years.

11. The evolving information society will have a growing impact on social and economic development during implementation of the post-2015 agenda. The importance of exploiting the potential developmental value of ICTs and of considering the development of the inclusive information society in the broader context of the post-2015 development agenda was emphasized in the outcome documents of the WSIS+10 High-Level Event. In its resolution 69/204 of 19 December 2014, the General Assembly stressed the need to harness ICTs' potential as critical enablers of sustainable development and to consider capacity-building for their productive use in elaborating the post-2015 agenda.

II. The ten-year review of implementation of WSIS outcomes

12. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society requested the General Assembly to make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015.[11] On 31 July 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/302 concerning modalities for this review.[12] It recognized the role of CSTD in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in system-wide WSIS follow-up, particularly the review and assessment of progress made in implementing WSIS outcomes. CSTD was requested to submit its report on the 10-year review following its eighteenth session, through the Council, to the General Assembly, by June 2015.

13. The General Assembly decided that its overall review will be concluded by a two-day high-level meeting, to be held in December 2015. This will take stock of progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes. It will address potential ICT gaps and areas for continued focus, as well as challenges, including bridging the digital divide and harnessing ICTs for development. It will be preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory process that takes into account inputs from all relevant WSIS stakeholders. The General Assembly requested its President to appoint two co-facilitators to lead an intergovernmental negotiation process resulting in an agreed outcome document for adoption at the high-level meeting, and to organize informal interactive consultations with all relevant stakeholders to collect inputs for this process.

14. ITU hosted the WSIS+10 High-Level Event, an extended version of the annual WSIS Forum, in Geneva during June 2014. The High-Level Event was co-organized by ITU, with UNESCO, UNCTAD and the United Nations Development Programme. It adopted two WSIS+10 outcome documents prepared through the Multi-stakeholder Participatory Platform: the *WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS Outcomes*,

[10] http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/reg/D-REG-TTR.15-2014-PDF-E.pdf.
[11] http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html, paragraph 111.
[12] http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/302.

which assesses implementation to date, and the *WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015*, which considers future implementation. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, held in the Republic of Korea in October/November 2014, endorsed the outcome documents.

15. In its resolution 2013/9 of 22 July 2013, the Economic and Social Council invited the CSTD to collect inputs from all facilitators and stakeholders, organize a substantive discussion concerning WSIS implementation at its seventeenth session, and submit the results of its 10-year review of progress made, through the Council, to the General Assembly as it will make its overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit in 2015. Following a substantive discussion at its seventeenth session in May 2014, the CSTD launched an open consultation including regional meetings and written contributions. A 10-year review report prepared by the CSTD secretariat will be considered by the Commission at its eighteenth session in May 2015.[13]

III. Implementation and follow-up at the regional level

A. Africa

16. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reports that African countries have made gradual but encouraging progress in access to ICTs and their application in development. Investment in broadband infrastructure has increased, improving connectivity and facilitating development initiatives including mobile financial services. However, broadband deployment has not kept pace with other world regions, causing concern that Africa may miss economic opportunities that depend on high-quality communications.

17. ECA has supported the development of national ICT strategies through its African Information Society Initiative. Forty-eight African countries now have national ICT policies in place.[14] ECA published the *Manual for Measuring e-Government* with the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development during 2014.[15] A regional consultation meeting, entitled "WSIS+10 and Beyond: Outcomes and Perspectives for Africa", is to take place in Ethiopia in April 2015.[16]

18. In June 2014, member States of the African Union agreed its Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection.[17] Governments and international agencies have focused on capacity-building in cybersecurity and legislation to facilitate e-commerce. The African Union Commission has contracted the Internet Society to support implementation of Internet exchange points in 30 countries and five regions of the continent.[18]

19. The third African Internet Governance Forum was held in Nigeria in July 2014, with support from ECA and the African Union.[19]

[13] A draft report was considered by CSTD at its intersessional panel in November 2014: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/CSTD_2014_wsis10review_report_en.pdf.

[14] http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/a69d65_bn_ECA.pdf.

[15] http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/partnership/eGovernment_Manual_Final_2014.pdf.

[16] http://www.uneca.org/wsis10.

[17] http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/en_AU%20Convention%20on%20CyberSecurity%20Pers%20Data%20Protec%20AUCyC%20adopted%20Malabo.pdf.

[18] http://pages.au.int/axis.

[19] http://www.uneca.org/afigf.

B. Asia and the Pacific

20. ESCAP undertook a comprehensive review of WSIS outcomes during 2013. Almost all countries in the region have now achieved full mobile coverage but there is an increasing gap in mobile broadband deployment and Internet connectivity and use between more and less developed countries. Particular challenges arise for landlocked countries and small island developing States. ESCAP is developing improved indicators to measure and stimulate ICT development in the region, focusing on the impact of changing technologies.[20]

21. ESCAP works with regional agencies, including the Asian Development Bank and Asia–Pacific Telecommunity, to stimulate regional infrastructure development. Its Committee on Information and Communications Technology, meeting in Thailand in October 2014,[21] reinforced its commitment to promote the Asia–Pacific Information Superhighway, aimed at enhancing connectivity of landlocked developing countries through links to submarine cable and deployment of Internet exchange points.[22]

22. The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development provides training, research and knowledge management through its Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders programme.[23]

C. Western Asia

23. ESCWA maintains an information society portal for the ESCWA region which gathers and analyses data on regional trends in order to provide information and resources to policymakers and other stakeholders.[24] Information from the portal was published in the latest edition of the ESCWA biennial *Regional Profile of the Information Society in the Arab Region.*[25]

24. ESCWA built on its 2013 review of e-government strategies by preparing a study of integration of e-government service delivery within the region. It prepared a study concerning cybercrime and cybersecurity, organized capacity-building initiatives to promote Internet exchange points and is finalizing a study of mobile government applications.[26]

25. ESCWA has continued to promote Arabic content and online services following the introduction of multilingual Internet domain names. A joint publication with ITU, *Digital Arabic Content*, was published in June 2014,[27] and a forum on digital Arabic content was organized in Egypt, in partnership with ITU and the League of Arab States, in November 2014.[28]

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[20] http://www.unescap.org/resources/working-paper-progress-towards-wsis-targets-escap-and-regional-perspectives-measuring-ict.

[21] http://www.unescap.org/events/committee-information-and-communications-technology-fourth-session.

[22] http://www.unescap.org/our-work/ict-disaster-risk-reduction/asia-pacific-information-superhighway.

[23] http://www.unapcict.org/academy.

[24] http://isper.escwa.un.org/.

[25] http://isper.escwa.un.org/ISProfiles/RegionalProfiles/RegionalProfile2013/RegionalProfile2013Launch/tabid/283/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

[26] http://unctad.org/meetings/en/Presentation/CSTD_2014_Fraihat.pdf.

[27] http://isper.escwa.un.org/FocusAreas/DigitalArabicContent/News/BoostingDigitalArabicContent/tabid/284/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

[28] http://isper.escwa.un.org/FocusAreas/DigitalArabicContent/News/SecondRegionalForumonDigitalArabicContent/tabid/285/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

26. The third Arab Internet Governance Forum was held in Lebanon in November 2014 under the title "Arab Perspective for Shaping the Future of the Internet".[29]

D. Latin America and the Caribbean

27. Studies by ECLAC show continued growth in ICT access and usage, but differing rates of digital development between countries. ECLAC is concerned that adoption of cloud computing lags behind OECD countries because of limited broadband capacity, weak legal and regulatory frameworks and lack of human resources, reducing potential benefits for economic growth. It has published a regional survey and policy proposals to stimulate take-up of cloud computing[30] and encourages adoption of big data and open data.[31]

28. ECLAC provides the technical secretariat for the 2010–2015 Plan of Action for the Information and Knowledge Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2015), the region's third WSIS action plan, focused on broadband.[32] Member States discussed objectives for the digital agenda eLAC2018 at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean in Costa Rica in November 2014. Proposals will be presented at the Sixth Ministerial Conference in Mexico in August 2015.

29. The ECLAC Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean[33] gathers evidence from household surveys to enable analysis and support planning, while its Regional Broadband Observatory[34] monitors indicators on broadband diffusion, access, tariffs and speeds. ECLAC acts as the secretariat of the Regional Dialogue on broadband, which fosters regional infrastructure integration, regulatory consistency and the development of indicators.

E. Europe

30. ECE plays a central role in ICT-enabled trade facilitation. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, which it manages, supports joint development of electronic business standards by public and private sectors.[35] ECE promotes "single window" data-sharing initiatives to reduce trade costs. Its online Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide provides a single point of access to trade information in four languages.[36]

31. The Council of Europe continued to implement its Strategy on Internet Governance for 2012–2015[37] and began preparing a successor strategy for 2016–2019. It adopted a guide to human rights for Internet users in April 2014, including freedoms of expression

[29] http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=3361E.
[30] http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/7/52947/P52947.