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**REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT  
ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY:  
Tunis, Phase II (WSIS II)**

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## **I. Introduction**

In its Resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly of the United Nations welcomed the resolution of the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in which the Council endorsed the proposal put forward by the Secretary-General of the ITU for the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society in two phases: the first phase in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 and the second phase in Tunisia 16-18 November 2005. The General Assembly also invited the ITU to assume the leading management role in the Executive Secretariat of the Summit and its preparatory process, in cooperation with other interested organizations and partners.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session in 2004, the Executive Council in its EX.CL/Dec.118 (v) commended the able participation of Africa in the first phase of WSIS and asked the African Union Commission to participate in a more concrete and visible way in the preparatory process of the second phase of the Summit to be held in Tunis

The decision N° Assembly/AU/Dec.76 (V) of the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the African Union July 2005, Sirte, LIBYA, commends the effective role played by Africa in the preparatory phases of the Tunis Summit at the continental level and urges African countries to continue their coordination to ensure fruitful and more effective participation in the Summit process. The decision also invites members States and African Governments to participate in the Summit.

## **2. The First Phase of WSIS: Geneva 2003**

The first Phase of WSIS was organized from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003 in Geneva (Switzerland) and its main outputs were a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. The following issues are articulated in these two documents:

- The necessity to conceive and to set up networks, facilities and services that will be accessible and easily approachable at low cost;
- The necessity for every nation to reinforce capabilities in education, research and development, to allow them to participate in the Information Society;
- The necessity to ensure the security of networks and information to enhance user trust in the use of ICT;
- The need to establish an enabling environment for the development of ICT at all levels (national, regional and international);

- The need to address questions around Internet governance in democratic and transparent ways through international and multilateral networks;
- Membership in the Alliance of Numerical Solidarity offered as guarantee of international collaboration in the field of ICT, created by Africa under the name of Digital Solidarity Fund.

## **2.2. Unresolved Issues during this Phase**

Due to a lack of consensus, important issues such as the Internet governance and the financing of the development of ICT were left unresolved by the Summit of Geneva. The creation and financing mechanism of the Digital Solidarity Fund were not completed as required by the members.

The Summit asked the Secretary General of the United Nations to create a Working Group on Internet Governance- WGIG to study the question of Internet Governance and make proposals to be presented for decision by the Summit of Tunis. The Summit also asked for the creation of a Task Force to examine the mechanisms of financing and report to the second phase of WSIS Tunis.

## **2.3. African Participation in the First Phase of WSIS**

The Ministerial Conference held in Dakar from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004 assessed the participation of the continent in the Geneva phase of WSIS. The Ministers were of the opinion that there was balanced representation in the group that met. They sought to know if compromises could be made on the points of divergence such as Internet Governance, financing of the development of ICT and actualization of the Digital Solidarity Fund. The meeting of Dakar noted a weakness in the coordination of preparatory activities, which undermined the opportunity for Africa to defend its proposals better.

## **3. Preparation for the Second Phase of WSIS – Tunis 2005**

### **3.1. Preparation at the Global Level**

The format for the preparation of the second phase of the WSIS Summit consisted of the following:

#### Groups & Task Forces and these included:

- Working Group on the Internet Governance (WGIG),
- Task-Force on Financing Mechanisms (TFFM),
- Group of Friends of the Chair (GFC);

#### PrepCom (preparatory committee) meetings which included:

- PrepCom-1 held in Hammamet in Tunisia from 24th to 26th June 2004;
- PrepCom-2 held from 17th to 25th February 2005 in Geneva;
- PrepCom-3 held from 19th to 30th September 2005 in Geneva and from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2005 in Tunis

Preparatory Regional Conferences according to geopolitical, cultural and linguistic groupings and also Sub-Regional Conferences (case of Pan-Arab Conference in Cairo from 8th to 10th May 2005).

The main outcome of PrepCom-1 was the decision concerning structure, which was presented to, and adopted by PrepCom-2. The outcomes of PrepCom-2 was the adoption of a structure for the Summit of Tunis and an agreement on the creation of a Digital Solidarity Fund.

After lengthy debate, the PepCom 3 reached decision regarding Tunis commitment and the agenda of the Information Society.

### **3.2. African Preparatory Process.**

#### **a) Organization**

African Preparation was primarily organized around the Regional Conference of Accra (February 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005); the Bamako Bureau outcome; participation in the meetings of PrepCom-1 PrepCom-2, PrepCom 3; Participation at Pan-Arab Conference (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2005, Cairo). The mechanism set up by African Countries to prepare for the 2nd phase of the Summit is as follows:

- The Bamako Bureau: This technical group was established during the first African preparatory session - the African Regional Meeting Preparatory to the WSIS which was held in Bamako in May 2002 to prepare the African positions for the WSIS. This group consists of representatives from governmental experts, Civil Society, Private Sector, youth, women, and others.
- The Ministerial Committee was set up in Dakar in 2004 and was initially constituted by 8 Member Countries. The Committee re-formed in Accra and now consists of 15 members: South Africa, Algeria, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Congo Brazzaville, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal, Tunisia.

#### **b) African preparatory Conference held in Ghana**

The continent organized, under the leadership of the African Union and the coordination of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), supported by the Bamako Bureau, the African Region Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), hosted by the Government of Ghana from 28th January to 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005. In addition under the direction of the African Ministerial Committee on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) led by Ghana, the continent participated in the second WSIS Preparatory Committee as well as in the Pan Arab Regional Conference

on WSIS, and also collated views from all stakeholders for input in the various Prepcom documents.

### c) **Main Outputs of the African Preparation**

The main outputs of the African preparation process are the Accra Commitments and the **African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) Accra Commitments:**

The Accra Commitments involve:

- The major principles underpinning the African information society.
- Development guidelines.
- Resource mobilization, including human resources.
- International cooperation.
- Operational aspects; road to Tunis, ICT implementation strategies, financial mechanisms, Internet governance, partnership, prospects and the way after Tunis.

The African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) defines the lines of action to be implemented for every key element of commitments of Accra. These key elements are:

- Facilities and access;
- Strategy and the policy of development of WSIS at national and regional level;
- Indicators of the of Information Society
- The strengthening of capabilities;
- Research and development;
- Internet Governance;
- Multi-stakeholder partnership.

### d) **The Role of the African Union Commission**

In response to the resolution requesting more concrete participation, the Commission got involved in coordinating and monitoring the African preparation process and participation in the various meetings. The Commission has accomplished the following actions:

- In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and ITU in Addis Ababa, the Commission adopted a format for the Conference of Accra and worked closely with the African Telecommunication Union on sensitization of Member States;
- Participated in thematic sessions in Accra, in the Ministerial Meeting and in the Regional Conference;
- Financially contributed to the organization of the conference of Accra
- Participated in the Pan-Arab Meeting in Cairo
- Participated in the African Ministerial Committee meetings

- Participation in the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom 1, 2 & 3)
- Officiated the Ministers' meeting held in Dakar Senegal to approve the African Action Plan as recommended by the Sirte Summit. The Meeting was unable to form a quorum and was thus postponed. It subsequently took place in Geneva on the margins of Prepcom3
- Participation in the WSIS and its side events

### **3.2 The Digital Solidarity Fund**

In February 2003, during the preparatory process of the first phase of WSIS, His Excellency Mr. A Wade, President of Republic of Senegal, has proposed on behalf of Africa, to create a Global Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF). The fund would support a new financial mechanism for development and mobilisation of international networks for local authorities.

The DSF was launched officially in Geneva on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005 in the presence of His Excellency Mr Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. A Wade, President of Republic of Senegal and the chairman of NEPAD Prof. W. Nkuhlu. The fund has received contributions from its 17 founding members in 2005. The fund Executive Committee and its Secretariat will prepare the move from political support to legal agreement, by calling an international conference in 2006 in Geneva. The objective of the conference will be the adoption of an International Convention on a global DSF.

## **4. WSIS in Tunis**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The Tunis Phase of the Summit, which was held from 16-18 November 2005 gathered 25,000 participants, including 50 Head of States and Governments. 49 African countries participated in the Summit, which adopted 2 documents, namely the "Tunis Commitment" and the "Tunis Agenda for the Information Society".

The 3 major decisions of the Tunis Phase are related to financial mechanisms, Internet governance and Implementation and Follow up.

### **4.2. Tunis Commitment**

The commitment of Tunis, reiterates the unequivocal support for the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003.

The Commitment reaffirms the following:

- Their desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations
- The universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

- That the Tunis Summit represents a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can bring to humanity and the manner in which they can transform people's activities, interaction and lives and thus, increase confidence in the future.
- The commitments made in Geneva and further developed in Tunis by focusing on financial mechanisms for bridging the digital divide, on Internet governance and related issues, as well as on follow-up and implementation of the Geneva and Tunis decisions, as referenced in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

The participants engaged on several points, mainly

- Evaluation and follow up of progress in bridging the digital divide, taking into account different levels of development, so as to reach internationally-agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals,
- The empowering young people as key contributors to building an inclusive Information Society. They will actively engage youth in innovative ICT-based development programmes and widen opportunities for youth to be involved in e-strategy processes.
- The necessity to work together towards the implementation of the digital solidarity agenda, as agreed in paragraph 27 of the Geneva Plan of Action.
- Promotion of the inclusion of all peoples in the Information Society through the development and use of local and/or indigenous languages in ICTs.

#### **4.3. Tunis Agenda for the Information Society**

The delegates reaffirmed the commitments made in Geneva and built on them in Tunis by focusing on financial mechanisms for bridging the digital divide, Internet governance and related issues, as well as on implementation and follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis decisions.

##### **a) Financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of ICT for development**

The Task Force for Financial mechanism (TFFM) report sets out the complexity of existing mechanisms, both private and public, which provides financing for ICTs in developing countries. It identifies areas where these could be improved and where ICTs could be given higher priority by developing countries and their development partners. Based on the conclusion of the review of the report, the participants considered the improvements and innovations of financial mechanisms, including the creation of a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund, as mentioned in the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

Delegates recognised the existence of the digital divide and the challenges that this poses for many countries having limited resources and which are forced to choose between many competing objectives in their development planning. They also recognised the scale of the problem in bridging the digital divide, which will require adequate and sustainable investments in ICT infrastructure and services, capacity building, and transfer of technology over many years to come.

In conclusion the delegates:

- Called upon the international community to promote the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, including ICT, to adopt policies and programs with a view to assisting developing countries;
- Acknowledged the special funding needs of the developing world, as referred to in paragraph 16 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles, and recognised that there are a number of areas in need of more financial resources and where current approaches to ICT development financing have devoted insufficient attention to date.
- Encouraged the strengthening of international cooperation and solidarity aimed at enabling all countries, especially those referred to in paragraph 16 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles, to develop ICT infrastructure and ICT applications;
- Recommended improvements and innovations in existing financing mechanisms, including and welcomed the establishment of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) as an innovative financial mechanism of a voluntary nature open to interested stakeholders with the objective of transforming the digital divide into digital opportunities for the developing world

## **b) Internet Governance**

The Summit reaffirmed the principles enunciated in the Geneva phase of the WSIS, in December 2003, that the Internet has evolved into a global facility available to the public and its governance should constitute a core issue of the Information Society agenda. 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 organisations. It 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. Therefore the participants:

- Reiterated their commitments to the positive uses of the Internet and other ICTs and to take appropriate actions and preventive measures, as determined by law, against abusive uses of ICT and to work earnestly towards multilingualisation of the Internet, as part of a multilateral, transparent and democratic process;
- Recognised that the existing arrangements for Internet governance have worked effectively to make the Internet the highly robust, dynamic and geographically diverse medium that it is today. They also recognized that there are many cross-cutting international public policy issues that require attention and are not adequately addressed by the current mechanisms.

In view of the continuing internationalization of the Internet and the principle of universality, participants agreed to implement the Geneva Principles regarding Internet governance and decided to invite the UN Secretary-General in an open and inclusive process, to convene, by the second quarter of 2006, a meeting of the new forum for



multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the *Internet Governance Forum* (IGF). Some important points of the mandate of the Forum are to:

- Discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance
- 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;
- 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;

### c) Implementation and Follow-up

Building an inclusive development-oriented Information Society will require unremitting multi-stakeholder effort. The delegates commit themselves to remain fully engaged—nationally, regionally and internationally—to ensure sustainable implementation and follow-up of the outcomes and commitments reached during the WSIS. This should take into account the multi-faceted nature of building the Information Society which includes, effective cooperation among governments, private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other international organisations, according to their different roles and responsibilities and leveraging on their expertise.

Therefore delegates decided to establish mechanisms for implementation and follow-up at national, regional and international levels.

#### • At the national level,

Based on the WSIS outcomes, governments are encouraged, with the participation of all stakeholders and bearing in mind the importance of an enabling environment, to set up a national *implementation* mechanisms, in which:

- National e-strategies, where appropriate, should be an integral part of national development plans, including Poverty Reduction Strategies,
- ICT should be fully mainstreamed into strategies for Official Development Assistance (ODA);
- Existing bilateral and multilateral technical assistance programmes, including those under the UN Development Assistance Framework, should be used.

#### • At the regional level:

Upon request from governments, regional inter-governmental organisations in collaboration with other stakeholders should carry out WSIS implementation activities. UN Regional Commissions, based on request of Member States and within approved budgetary resources, may organise regional WSIS follow-up activities in collaboration with regional and sub-regional organisations, with appropriate frequency.

- **At the international level,**

Recognizing the importance of the enabling environment; *Implementation and follow-up* of the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phases of the Summit should take into account the main themes and action lines in the Summit documents. Each UN agency should act according to its mandate and competencies, and pursuant to decisions of their respective governing bodies, and within existing approved resources;

## **5 AU Activities related to the WSIS Tunis**

- The launch of the African ICT Week: The AU Commission took advantage of the spotlight on ICTs as a result of the WSIS being held in one of the AU member States, to launch an annual ICT promotion campaign. This campaign took the form of a dedicated week in which to focus the African Public on the importance of ICTs in socio-economic development and in the promotion of good governance and service provision. A special Website to facilitate communication with the public was created and through a special forum on the website, ideas were exchanged among the public on how to improve access to ICT's. To kick start the campaign the Chairperson of the Commission declared the first day of the Week, an African Paperless day whereby African offices in all sectors were encouraged to communicate solely by electronic means. The AU Commission led by example and following an email instruction from the chairperson, the African Paperless day was observed.

The HRST Department delegation at the WSIS organized a side event Summit to inform the participating African delegations about the establishment of the African ICT Week. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Ghana as chairperson of the African Ministers' Committee for ICTs. Many other Ministers also attended. Various speakers from the floor expressed their support for the African ICT Week Initiative and agreed that it would assist in the popularization of ICT's in Member States. They called on the Department to ensure that Member States are informed in time next year so that they can budget and prepare for activities they will undertake. It is hoped that AU Member States will embrace the African ICT Week and use it to introduce young people especially in rural areas to ICTs and to mount competition etc to encourage productive use of ICT's.

- **AU/NEPAD** jointly prepared an Exhibition with NEPAD for the WSIS. An information video on the AU as well as brochures and posters on the AU and ICT Week were also exhibited. While the exhibition was a good start and it attracted a lot of visitors, our input could be improved. There is need to have in-house readily available Exhibition material prepared by professionals of the AU. The brochures and video footage informing people about what is the AU should be made available to each Department for use during their various international meetings. Our stand could also have

benefited from the availability of AU insignia e.g. T-shirts and caps, which visitors to the stand could have taken away.

- **Roundtable for a Multilingual Cyberspace with the participation of all in Information and Shared Knowledge Society.**

Commissioner for HRST officiated at this Roundtable organized by the Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) and the e-Africa Commission of NEPAD in partnership with UNESCO. The Roundtable was the continuation of a thematic conference on cultural and linguistic diversity in cyberspace, which was held in Bamako (Mali) from 6-7 May 2005. The Tunis Roundtable succeeded in creating an international multi-stakeholder network of organizations committed to promoting linguistic and cultural diversity to ensure the participation of all in the information and shared knowledge society.

- **Formalizing African Preparatory Structures for Implementation of ARAPKE.**

Commissioner called a meeting of the ICT Minister's Bureau to discuss the way forward after the WSIS. In attendance were Ministers of Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. Commissioner started by appreciating the sterling work the Ministers had done in leading the preparations for the WSIS. She regretted the fact that while the AU had played an important role, it was hampered by the fact that the process was started long before the establishment of the Department. She then proposed the normalization and formalize of the structures that had participated in the preparations for the WSIS. Such formalization would entail applying the provisions of the AU Constitutive Act to the functioning of the structures. In response the Ministers appreciated the Commissioner's initiative and said that this kind of meeting was long overdue. They emphasized the importance of creating a formal Ministerial structure according to AU procedures. They recalled the resolution that was taken at the Ghana Conference where the AU was requested to formalize the Ministerial process.

As part of the process of formalizing the functioning of ICT Ministers, the meeting agreed to retain the Bamako Group as an important technical support group for the Ministers and that it should be strengthened so that it is representative of AU Member States.

- **Side-event for Partners**

ECA in partnership with the AU organized a side event for partners on the sidelines of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis and after a workshop on the same subject. The meeting attracted over hundred stakeholders from ICT4D partners in Africa, Government officials, Civil Society Representatives and private sectors actors, was aimed at devising and discussion partnership for the implementation of the ARAPKE. Organizers highlighted the importance of structured and sustainable

Partnerships in the Information to ensure sustainable financing mechanism and effective creation of the African Information Society. They also stressed that Africa's success in the implementation of the Plan of Action, is closely tied to success in the integration of African economies and States

In response partners and stakeholders (African Development Bank (ADB), International Development Research Center (IDRC), International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), Industry Canada NEPAD e-Africa Commission, CEMAC, Private Sector and Civil Society representatives) expressed interests to collaborate under the framework of ARAPKE. They commended the broad field of opportunities presented by ARAPKE, which they felt are a translation of the African vision into concrete actions. In this regard, they would like to see the establishment of enabling environment to ensure the real participation of all stakeholders at national, sub-regional and global levels and suggested that ARAPKE should focus on sub-regional initiatives to be able to get more visibility in implementation.

Participants also commend the synergy that now exists between the African Union and ECA in the WSIS process that led to the finalization of the African Regional Action Plan. They called for projects that cover all sub-regions and take into account the various stakeholders involved in development of information society issues.

## **6. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. Observations**

- a. Like the other continents or political geographical bodies, Africa fought to have its points of view are taken into account during the two phases of the Summit and they were successfully included in the final documents.
- b. Several stakeholders of the continent took part in the WSIS process; Ministers through the Ministerial Committee, youth, women and the representatives of the civil society through the Bamako Group. However it is important to note the relatively poor participation of African Ministers in the ultimate stages such as the Regional Conference in Ghana and the meetings for the adoption of the African Action Plan on the Information Society, which was held in Dakar, Senegal.
- c. Some results of the Summit such as the Agreement on the Governance of Internet are certainly far from the hopes of the participants and in particular of Africans. But the participation of Africa in the debate must continue within the Forum on Governance of Internet that the Secretary-general of UN will create as requested by the Summit. In addition, the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), set up on Africa's proposal, must receive strong support.

- d. The decisions of the two phases of the WSIS - Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005 contained in the Geneva Statement of Principles and Action Plan Geneva as well as in the Tunis Commitment and Agenda, and African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), challenge the African stakeholders, Governments, or specialized and political, organizations and Institutions political to ensure their implementation;

## 6.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented for adoption by the Summit on the basis of the above-mentioned observations, mechanism for implementation and follow-up actions to be taken at national, regional and international levels:

- a. That the AU Commission formalizes the meetings of Ministers of ICT and the expert group to ensure the representativity of AU Member in the formal structure and also to ensure that they function according to the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.
- b. That the AUC organizes a Conference of the African Ministers in charge of Information and Communication Technologies with the participation of regional structures (REC) and Intergovernmental Organizations involved in Development, to adopt and discuss modalities for the implementation of the decisions of the WSIS and the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE);
- c. That the AUC and relevant organizations develop a comprehensive database to ensure inclusive participation of stakeholders in the implementation of regional activities in connection with the decisions of the WSIS;
- d. That the AUC and relevant organizations to map capacity building requirements of Member States and develop a relevant programme in this regard.
- e. That the AUC to urge Member States to install inclusive national mechanisms for the implementation of the decisions of the WSIS in order to contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives agreed on including the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.
- f. That the AUC to ensure a close co-operation with the regional and international organizations as well as the Regional Economic Communities in the follow-up and evaluation of the Information Society in Africa;
- g. That the AUC invites all the Member States, the local authorities, the international organizations to support and contribute to the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF).



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