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PROPOSALS TO THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE



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**GENERAL CONSIDERATION AND ARAB PARTICIPATION IN THE
WSIS-PREPARATORY WORK**

The preparatory work so far undertaken by regional groups in the perspective of the forthcoming WSIS-Preparatory Committee 2 (PrepCom2) has been tremendously heavy and significant results have been reached by the Bamako, Bucharest, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo preparatory conferences. One of the most encouraging phenomenon that have been witnessed during these four regional preparatory meetings is certainly that the important message sent by the United Nations General Assembly in Res.56/183 asking for and encouraging the widest possible participation of the UN Agencies, NGOs and Private Sector entities into the intergovernmental preparatory work of the WSIS and in the Summit itself has been listened by these stakeholders which are showing a strong willingness in participating in this preparatory work.

UN Agencies are taking a large part in this important achievement, which is in line with the decisions taken by governmental delegations that have attended PrepCom1, due to the wise suggestions made in this respect by the High Level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC), by PrepCom Chairman M. Samassekou and by PrepCom-SubCommittee1 and PrepCom-Sub Committee2 Chairpersons. Consequently, the UN ICT Task Force wishes to express its strong support to the participation of UN agencies and stakeholders in the WSIS inter-governmental preparatory process and in the Summit itself and it would support any forthcoming decision to be taken by governmental delegations in PrepCom2 that would facilitate, in consideration of the existing rules of procedures, the widening of this participation of UN Agencies and Civil Society (Proposal #1)

Our deep conviction in the Arab Regional Network of the UN-ICT Task Force is that the Arab world is today globally willing and ready to enter with force in the 21st Century Information Society and we fully endorse for our region the commitment taken through the Okinawa Charter which states: *"everyone should be enabled to participate in and no one should be excluded from the benefits of the global information society."* (Okinawa Charter on the Global Information Society, July 2000).

The way we look at the general situation in the Arab world is that it constitutes a quite highly homogeneous block of populations, one of the youngest in our planet, with a tremendous inclination to, and sense of, global communication. ICT activities in these regions started few years ago to be considered by Arab governments and populations, with reason, as a very important and strategic field for the future of their economic and social development.

We are all concerned with the serious political difficulties and threats that the whole region is presently facing which might negatively impact the level of involvement and implication of Arab administrations in the preparatory work of the Summit and specially, for unfortunate calendar reasons, in the PrepCom2 itself. However we would like to express the wish that this involvement be as strong as possible and the Arab Regional Network of the UN-ICT TF believes that UN Agencies, NGOs and Private Sector entities have a particular role to play in alleviating part of the burden from administrations.

In this regard, the Arab Regional Network of the UN-ICT TF would like to express its strong support to the Arab Digital Initiative (ADI) launched by the Arab Business Community after WSIS-PrepCom1 and have decided to participate in the implementation of this ADI, hoping that the UN agencies, the NGOs and all our partners in the UN-ICT TF and in the G8 DoT Force as well as the Arab administrations shall also support this important program aiming to widen the participation of the Arab world in the WSIS(Proposal#2)

WSIS THEMES WITH REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THE ARAB REGION

PrepCom1-SubCommittee2 wasn't able to agree on a final list of Themes for the WSIS and Annex1 of the PrepCom1 final report contains a proposal by M. Pablo Pacedo (MEX) on the following list of themes as an initial basis for further work:

- Infrastructure: financing, deployment and sustainability.
- Identifying and overcoming barriers to the achievement of the information society.
- The role of government, the business sector and civil society in the promotion of ICT for development.
- Education, human resources development and training.
- Access to information and communication technologies.
- Information network security.
- Development of a policy and regulatory framework.
- ICT applications (education, health, culture, poverty eradication, government, employment, business).

On 18th September 2002, Chairman of SubCommittee2 has closed its 1st informal meeting on themes submitting a final report (See Annex1) that was sent to Regional Preparatory Meetings. UN ICT-TF is of the opinion that Western Asia Preparatory conference should consider this important document during its debates and address the issues included those which remain between square-brackets in the draft because of lack of agreement.

The UN ICT TF supports in general the results as stated in this final report. However, drawing a particular attention to the specific needs of developing countries and especially of Arab countries, the Arab Regional Network would propose a certain number of changes in this document support to (proposal #3):

- Proposal #3: Principle 1 : "The Summit should be development-oriented overcoming the digital divide". Principle 3: "The Summit should consider as a priority the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural identity". Principle 4: "The Summit should stress the importance of using ICT for the benefit of disadvantaged groups such as: women, youth, disabled, indigenous peoples, migrants".
- Proposal#4: Add to this list of communities "inhabitants from remote, rural and desert areas"

The Arab Regional Network would also like to express its strong support to those of the themes as listed in the Final Report:

- Theme 1 of the Final Report should states as follows (Proposal#5): "Universal and Equitable access to information and communication sciences and technologies"
- Proposal#6: The square-brackets for Universal and equitable should be removed
- Proposal#7: The words between brackets in Theme 1 of the Final Report "including technology transfer" should be deleted and a separate Theme should be added that would state as follows: "The Summit should consider the extreme importance for developing ICT and bridging the Digital Divide in developing countries of the Transfer of Technologies and should agree on a resolution, in line with those adopted by World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-02, Istanbul), aiming to subtract Transfer of ICT Technologies from any political consideration and to avoid the use by some countries of regulatory decisions which forbid or refrain the Transfer of ICT Technologies in favour developing countries whatsoever

could be the political reason presented as constituting the legal basis of such regulatory decisions"

- Proposal#7: Remove the square-brackets from Theme 7 and adding after "a national" the worlds: ", sub-regional and, as far as possible" so as the 1st part of the sentence would state: Enabling a national, sub-regional and , as far as possible, international environment"....

The ARN of the UN ICT Task Force shall submit these proposals to the 4th meeting of UN ICT TF (Geneva 21-22 February) and to PrepCom2.

ANNEX1: INFORMAL MEETING ON THEMES / SUB-COMMITTEE2

18 September 2002 – Final version

OUTCOME OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF SUB-COMMITTEE 2 OF PREPCOM1 OF THE WSIS

Based on the document adopted in the 1st PrepCom1 on principles guiding the preparatory work and the WSIS as well as the proposal from the Chair of Sub-Committee2 on themes for the WSIS, informal consultations were held from 16 to 18th September 2002. The meeting agreed to submit the following as an informal input to the Regional Preparatory Meetings and to WSIS-PrepCom2. In this regard, the following general set of principles was identified in a preliminary manner to guide the preparatory work and the Summit.

- The Preparatory Committee and the Summit should be aimed at extending the benefits of the Information Society to all and should be development-oriented, overcoming the digital divides
- The need to find a shared understanding of and to raise awareness of:
 - The information society; and
 - how the challenges of the digital divides can be met
- The Summit should consider both infrastructure and content issues
- Preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural identity should be a priority
- Relevant ethical dimensions of ICT should be considered
- A spirit of international co-operation should prevail
- ICTs are a tool for achieving economic and social goals, such as those stated in the UN Millennium Declaration, and not an end in itself
- The importance of universal and inclusive access to the Information Society
- [There is a need for broad-based partnerships among stakeholders][The importance of a wide spectrum of partnerships among stakeholders]
- The importance of communities and of utilising ICTs for the benefit of disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, youth, children, the disabled, indigenous peoples, migrants)
- [The importance of the issue of information network security]

In the same preliminary manner the following set of themes was identified as an initial basis for further work.

- Information and communication infrastructure: financing and investment, affordability, development, and sustainability.
 - Wide spectrum of partnerships for investments

- Identifying and overcoming barriers to the achievement of the information society with a human perspective
- [Universal and equitable] access to information and communication sciences and technologies [including technology transfer] and access to and creation of information and knowledge based on cultural and linguistic diversity
- The role of governments, relevant UN organs and agencies, relevant international, regional and national organisations including financial and development institutions, business sector, civil society/NGOs, academic institutions, media and other relevant actors in the development of an information society including promotion of ICT for development
- Capacity building: human resources development, education, and training
- Options
 - [Information network security]
 - [Global ICT governance, including information security and network security, data protection, consumer security and user privacy]
 - [Information security and network security]
 - [Information security]
- [[Enabling [a national and international] environment notably] [policies and regulatory frameworks][and establishing codes of conduct for business and enterprises]]
- Promotion of development oriented ICT applications for all (e.g. education, health, culture, poverty eradication, e-government, employment, business, e-commerce, local content, environment, prevention and early warning systems, vocal and tactile applications)
 - Encouraging the participation of SME especially from developing countries in the ICT field
- [Follow up and assessment]