General Assembly's overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes

Official Form for Written Submissions

A. Your Information

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B. Formal Input

Canada looks forward to working with all stakeholders over the coming months to assess progress made since the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) towards building a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society". Canada envisions a future in which individuals in every corner of the globe can create, access, use, and share information and knowledge, in which individuals' human rights and freedoms are protected, in which networked technologies continue to generate prosperity and spur innovation, and in which our information and digital infrastructure are secure.

1. To what extent has progress been made on the vision of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society in the ten years since the WSIS?

In the ten years since WSIS there has been remarkable progress.   Increasingly available and affordable ICTs -- thanks to the rapid growth of wireless networks, the adoption and use of mobile phones and innovation in technology-- have had a significant impact on economic, social, political, and cultural development worldwide. We have seen access to and use of ICTs helping to reduce inequalities, transform health and education outcomes, spur job creation, enable the enjoyment of human rights, and drive economic growth.

The achievements made in mobilizing ICTs for development over the past decade is a result of all stakeholders -- from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, governments and international organizations -- working together. This cooperation has proven vital to identifying new and innovative solutions to development challenges.

2. What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes?

There is much work to be done to close the digital divide, both within and between countries, and to extend the potential benefits of ICTs to all, including women and marginalized groups. These gaps are a barrier to future economic growth and social advancements in health, education and other domains. In addressing them, it is essential that we continue to fully engage all stakeholders.

In addition, more work is needed to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected and promoted both online and offline. These freedoms are closely tied to individuals' participation in the Information Society and to the attainment of development goals.

In addressing these challenges, we have a solid foundation on which to build. We should rely on the common vision and principles set forth at the World Summit on the Information Society a decade ago.

3. What should be the priorities in seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?

The WSIS+10 review should focus attention on what mobilized the international community a decade ago: to leverage the potential of ICTs to enhance opportunities for all people worldwide. ICTs can support peoples' efforts to lift themselves out of poverty and to improve their quality of life. According to the World Bank, every 10% increase in broadband Internet penetration in developing countries correlates with a 1.38% increase in GDP[i]. Focusing on enabling the full development potential of ICTs to support the post-2015 development agenda is particularly relevant as the international community sets out the Sustainable Development Goals this year.

We must continue to make steady progress toward bridging the digital divide. We should look to the last decade of accumulated experience for guidance on how we can do more to harness ICTs to achieve sustainable development results. We know that many factors facilitate developmental gains. These include enabling environments that encourage competition, investment, innovation, and public-private partnerships; respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law; bottom-up and holistic ICT strategies that are fully aligned with and integrated at an early stage into national development plans and other development frameworks; and training and capacity building to ensure that people have the appropriate skills and capabilities to use ICTs.

Canada shares the view expressed by many stakeholders that the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) serves as an important capacity-building forum where all stakeholders -- from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, governments, and international organizations -- can come together and share different perspectives concerning the Internet's development. Canada strongly supports the IGF and calls on Member States to continue its mandate. The IGF has demonstrated its value as an open, inclusive and truly multi-stakeholder initiative. It continues to mature and will be particularly important in the years to come as new technologies, opportunities and challenges emerge.

4. What are general expectations from the WSIS + 10 High Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly?

It is essential that voices from the broad stakeholder community are taken into full account in this preparatory process and in the High-Level Meeting in December. At the High-Level Meeting, we hope to see the General

Assembly, with all stakeholders, present a common assessment of progress achieved since WSIS and the challenges that remain.

5. What shape should the outcome document take?

Canada looks forward to seeing a concise document from the High-Level Meeting which reviews progress made in implementing WSIS objectives. It should reaffirm the common vision and guiding principles agreed to at WSIS and assess progress against the Action Lines in the Geneva Plan of Action in a balanced manner. We believe that the Action Lines are sufficiently broad to address the rapid pace of innovation in information and communications technology and services.

The document should be informed by the WSIS review exercises undertaken, in consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders, by UN agencies over the past couple of years.

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[i] C. Qiang et al, "Economic impacts of broadband," Information and Communications for Development 2009: Extending Reach and Increasing Impact, 2009.