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

The Australian Government is pleased to make this written submission to the United Nations General Assembly Overall Review of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes.

Since the initial phases of the WSIS in 2003 and 2005, there has been unprecedented and unimagined growth in information and communications technologies (ICTs). ICTs now intersect with almost every aspect of our lives, from the way we conduct business or interact with government, to ways we can enhance our health and wellbeing, access local content and increase social interaction.

Australia continues to see ICTs as an enabler of sustainable development, of economic prosperity, and as a tool for sharing information enhancing social cohesion. We must ensure that everyone, especially those from Developing Countries, Least Developed Countries, and Small Island Developing States can realise the benefits of ICTs and note that while progress has been made, the digital divide persists.

This review process is a time to take stock of our progress, to assess achievements towards closing the digital divide, and identify where we face ongoing or evolving challenges to realising the WSIS vision.

Australia considers that at its core, the WSIS must continue to focus on its founding principle: to promote the use of ICTs to help countries overcome the digital divide and achieve global development goals. It is important to emphasise that WSIS is primarily a tool to discuss the very important and relevant role of ICTs in supporting development and prosperity at a global level, for developing and developed countries alike.

Our achievements to date in progressing the WSIS agenda are the result of the efforts of many. Governments, industry, civil society, the technical community, and individuals have all contributed to realising the WSIS goals and targets. Australia strongly supports the inclusion of all stakeholders in the review process. Stakeholder consultations should be meaningful, and we must make sure there are effective avenues for incorporating the results of stakeholder consultations into the review process and outcome document.

Australia proposes that the WSIS review develop a clear and succinct outcome document, focused on reviewing the implementation of WSIS in line with Resolution 68/302 on Modalities for the overall review by the General Assembly of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Our view is that in the limited time available, the review process is not well placed to revise or replace the Geneva Declaration of Principles or the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. The eleven action lines agreed in Geneva continue to encompass the principles we seek to achieve today, even as technology changes. Each of the action lines should be given adequate attention throughout the review process.

We trust that the outcome document will reinforce human rights as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, will reiterate the principle of freedom of expression, and will support equality for all.

Australia also supports an approach that recognises and respects the roles of existing organisations and forums on cross-cutting issues. The WSIS review should be cautious not to duplicate existing work or take actions with unintended consequences.

Australia reiterates its support for the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance and suggests this model be recognised in the outcome document. It enables all stakeholders to participate in shaping the evolution and use of the internet and can ensure that the internet remains a central point for innovation and a driver of global economic growth. Australia would support a decision of the UN General Assembly for the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum.

The Australian Governments looks forward to working with all stakeholders throughout the review process over the coming months, towards a successful conclusion at the High-Level Meeting in December.