INPUTS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY REVIEW OF TUNIS AGENDA FOR THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

At the outset, India would like to appreciate the commendable work done by the President of the United Nations General Assembly, and the co-facilitators leading upto the WSIS+10 High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in December, 2015. India would like to acknowledge the Reports of the United Nations Secretary General. India would also like to acknowledge the work done by the UN agencies to provide support to the WSIS+10 Review process. We would like to specially thank the CSTD Secretariat for its two comprehensive reports, namely "WSIS Outcome: A Ten Year Review" and "Mapping of International Internet Public Policy Issues"; International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for the WSIS+10 High Level Event Outcome Document, UNESCO for its inputs on the WSIS+10 review process including the "Study on access, freedom of expression, privacy and ethics", "Building Inclusive Knowledge Societies" and Connecting the Dots: Options for Future Action, and UNCTAD for its comprehensive report on "Implementing WSIS Outcomes: A Ten-Year Review". India recognizes the value of the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, and is committed to actively contribute and engage in the preparatory process leading up to the High Level Meeting in December, 2015.

2.   India notes the mandate of the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes by the United Nations General Assembly as contained in paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda. India would like to reaffirm and renew its commitment to this Review process. India appreciates the initiative of the President of the General Assembly, as mandated in the Modalities Resolution A/RES/68/302 dated 31 July 2014 of the General Assembly, for convening informal interactive consultations with all relevant WSIS stakeholders including civil society, the private sector and academia, inviting them to engage with this process.

3.   As we stated at our First Session on 1 July, 2015, this Review must result in an assessment of the relevance of the provisions of the Tunis Agenda in the framework of the post-2015 Development Agenda, which is replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), mentioned in paragraphs 10, 90, and 106 of the Tunis Agenda. This assessment will enable the provisions of the Tunis Agenda to be used for the achievement of "internationally agreed development goals and objectives" in an integrated manner.

4.   India acknowledges the aspirations and goals of the Information Society as captured in the Tunis Agenda. Paragraph 1 of the Tunis Agenda in 2005 called upon WSIS stakeholders to move from principles to actions. The Review should reaffirm this commitment, so that we can work together to bridging the digital divide, as well as the gender digital divide within it, in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for development. We must revisit, review and reassess the Tunis Agenda to update its action lines on the basis of the experience of implementing this Agenda over the past ten years. Not only do we need to review the existing action lines and reassess its goals, but also accommodate new action lines to address the emerging issues in the Information Society, especially in the context of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

I. 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?

1.   India would like to recognize that considerable progress has been made in India towards a people-centred inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. Since the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2005, key progress has been made with respect to digital divide. In the last ten years, India has witnessed exponential growth in information and communication technology (ICT) connectivity. The number of internet connections have grown at a fast pace and has reached 300 million in March, 2015. The Digital opportunity is also immense, fueled by the mobile revolution in India. The total phone users have reached 998.6 million in April, 2015 and out of which 976 million are mobile phones. The overall tele-density has risen to 79.3%. India's initiatives have covered a vast number of areas: from health, industries, industrial promotion, investment inflows, AV media, agriculture to preservation of cultural objects, disaster management, social welfare, poverty alleviation, consumer affairs, human resource development etc.

2.   The Government of India has launched an ambitious program to bridge the digital divide. Digital India is the flagship program of the Government of India, which is to be implemented in the mission mode. The vision of Digital India is centered around three key areas: (i) Infrastructure a Utility to Every Citizen (ii) Governance and Services on Demand and (iii) Digital Empowerment of citizens. The "Digital India" program has launched multiple platforms and applications which allow citizens from urban areas as well as the hinterlands to access e-governance services and participate in the largest democracy in the world.

3.   The nine pillars of the Digital India program truly capture the aspirations of the next billion to be connected to the Internet. The nine pillars are (i) Broadband Highways, (ii)Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity, (iii) Public Internet Access Programme, (iv) e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology, (v) e-Kranti - Electronic Delivery of Services, (vi) Information for All, (vii) Electronics Manufacturing, (viii) IT for Job, and (ix) Early Harvest Programmes

4.   India has also invested considerably towards information and communication infrastructure. Bharat Net, on the key pillars of Digital India, is the largest rural connectivity project of its kind in the world. It aims to link 250,000 *gram panchayats* (cluster of villages), connecting 600 million rural citizens. Bharat Net is being funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

5.   With respect to e-Governance, last year, the Government has successfully launched major platforms to enhance citizen engagement – MyGov.in. An initiative called "*e-Basta*" has been launched to make school books accessible in digital form as e-books to be read on tablets and laptops.

6.   India has also made substantive progress in the field of multilingualism. India has launched internationalized domain names (IDN) ".Bharat" in eight languages. Additionally a draft web standard has been developed to address the issues related to correct display of Indian languages in various web browsers.

7.   Digital Literacy (DISHA) is aimed at capacity building focused on training 4.25 million citizens specifically in rural areas.

8.   There is no doubt that the Digital India program and its nine pillars is the key to a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

9.   Imbued by our traditional philosophy of seeing the world as one family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*), India remains committed to sharing our developmental experience in the

use of ICTs with other developing country members of the United Nations family, as provided for in paragraph 87 of the Tunis Agenda. Since the adoption of the Tunis Agenda in 2005, India has implemented the ambitious Pan-African e-Network Project, valued at $125 million, which seeks to connect 53 African member states of the African Union through a satellite and fiber-optic network to India and to each other. The areas covered include tele-medicine, tele-education, Voice Over Internet Protocol, infotainment, resource mapping, e-governance and e-commerce. More recently, India inaugurated the first tele-medicine project between India and Central Asia on 12 July 2015.

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

1.   India acknowledges the aspirations and goals of the Information Society as captured in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. The Tunis Agenda, 2005 called upon all actors – non-State as well as State, to move from principles to actions and to reaffirm our commitment to bridging the digital divide, and to build inclusive mechanisms for Internet governance and related issues. Now it is time to revisit, review and reassess the Tunis Agenda to update its action lines. Not only do we need to review the existing action lines and reassess its goals, but also accommodate new action lines to address the emerging issues in the Information Society.

2.   There is no doubt we have come a long way from 2005, and we are now in a better position to address issues related to access. However, there is an urgent need to focus on affordability of services as well as communication devices, multilingualism, capacity building, accessibility, and gender gap and ICT. It is also important to note that affordability of devices as well as ICT services is directly linked to the standards and interoperability. In order achieve universal access, we cannot just limit ourselves to developing infrastructure for access, but also facilitate access to ICTs for inclusive growth and development. The internet has become a key medium for delivering government services.

3.   The next billion will be connected over wireless networks, and developmental goals should aim at building robust back-end infrastructure to support wireless connectivity in rural and remote areas. Access cannot be limited to just providing connectivity - much work has to be done in building a self-sustaining ecosystem which fosters access and efficient use of ICT for development.

4.   It should be also recognized that in the next decade, a large proportion of new internet users will come from developing countries. The Tunis Agenda, 2005 has been reasonably successful in increasing access in developing countries. However, at the same time it should be noted that there is a lack of participation from developing countries in policy development processes related to the internet. India would like to highlight the need to enable developing countries to have a say in the policies which have a direct impact on their social and economic development. The role of developing countries cannot be limited to receiving support for development, and they should have an active role in Internet governance. In working towards such inclusion, it is crucial to ensure that the objective is substantive inclusion, and not merely formal inclusion, keeping in mind barriers which may hinder participation in processes that are nominally open to all. India supports the involvement of all developing countries to actively engage and participate in various fora related to Internet governance, and for these fora to explore means to facilitate such substantive engagement and participation.

5.   The Internet Governance Forum (IGF), one of the key outcomes of the Tunis Agenda, 2005, has been implemented substantially and has been a success in number of areas. India is committed to supporting, strengthening and deepening multistakeholder

processes such as the IGF. We propose that the IGF should be further strengthened and evolved as a multistakeholder forum to discuss and deliberate issues which have an immediate impact on internet governance, and that special care is taken to ensure that the voices of women and youth are adequately represented.

6.   There is no doubt that we need to reassess and review the functioning of multi-stakeholder forums and bodies within the Internet governance ecosystem. Today, multi-stakeholder systems face a major challenge with respect to ethics, accountability and transparency as well as representation of stakeholder groups. There is a growing need to ensure that all stakeholder groups are adequately and fully represented at various multi-stakeholder forums.

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

1.   <u>Financial Mechanisms</u>: In our Statement on 1 July 2015 at our First Session, we had expressed our concern on the lack of follow up on funding mechanisms for ICTs to implement the Tunis Agenda. The Tunis Agenda devotes paragraphs 3 to 28 to financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of ICT for Development. At the 3rd United Nations Financing for Development Conference held in Addis Ababa, India, represented by the Honourable Minister of State for Finance, emphasized that we must enhance technology cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are the core of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

2.   We propose that the Review should examine the provisions of the Outcome Document of the Addis Ababa Conference which can play a supportive role in implementing the financial mechanisms contained in the Tunis Agenda. The Review should synergize the provisions of paragraph 8 of the Tunis Agenda, which identify the role that three issues - adequate and sustainable investments in ICT infrastructure and services, capacity building, and transfer of technology - can play in bridging the digital divides, and the provisions of Section G, paragraphs 114, 116, 120, and especially 123 (the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism) of the Addis Ababa Outcome Document.

3.   As stated in paragraph 12 of the Tunis Agenda, ICTs are not only a medium of communication, but also a development enabler. The transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, including ICTs, is stipulated in paragraph 9 of the Tunis Agenda to assist developing countries bridge the digital divide. This provision has been articulated in the specific context of the Millennium Development Goals (in paragraph 10). The Addis Ababa Outcome Document establishes a Technology Facilitation Mechanism to assist implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda. We propose that this Review recommend that the issue of transfer of relevant ICTs to developing countries under the Tunis Agenda be integrated into the work of this Mechanism under the United Nations.

4.   We believe our Review should devote adequate time to the implementation of paragraph 23, which focus on the use of ICTs for development and poverty eradication, and paragraphs 26 and 27, which deal with equitable and universal access to, and better utilization of, financial mechanisms, as well as the recommended improvements and innovations in existing financing mechanisms. Of particular interest to many developing countries, including India, would be the review of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) to be set up by "interested stakeholders", as mentioned in paragraph 28 of the Tunis Agenda.

5.   Affordability: Access to the Internet continues at an unrealistically high price for many developing countries. We understand that ICT networks, being technology-driven, require substantial funds for installation and subsequent upgradation. However, this makes them unaffordable for most developing and under-developed economies. India would favour the Review proposing a concrete plan of action to address this challenge in light of the provisions of paragraph 50 of the Tunis Agenda. Furthermore, the discussion on affordability cannot be limited to cost of access but it should also include cost of access devices and other assistive technologies which are required for enabling access.

6.   Multilingualism: The Internet continues to be largely dominated by English, which has acted as a limitation in expanding its reach to vast majority of the humanity. Development of content in local / regional language would make the internet more customer friendly encouraging people's participation. The Review should propose specific action on this issue keeping paragraphs 53 and 90 (l) of the Tunis Agenda in mind.

7.   Strengthening IGF: There is a need to strengthen the Internet Governance Forum. In future, the IGF can be envisioned to serve as an informal policy clearing house for all global policies which have a direct link with Internet governance. Furthermore, there is need to reassess and review the structure and functions of various bodies involved in the IGF including the MAG and the IGF Secretariat. It is imperative that IGF which is considered to be a truly multi-stakeholder forum should adhere to highest levels of fairness, transparency and accountability.

8.   Deepening Multi-stakeholderism: India does not only support multi-stakeholderism but also encourages multi-stakeholderism itself to embrace all geographies, and all societies. In the same spirit, various bodies across the globe should build bottom-up institutions on the bed rock of multi-stakeholderism.

However, at the same it is important to acknowledge that there is lack of clarity and consensus on terms which are closely knit with multi-stakeholder form of governance e.g., enhanced cooperation. On issues related to security (paragraph 68) and countering of terrorism (paragraph 44) progress has not been registered these provisions need to be implemented fully.

Further, there is an urgent need to translate the concept of multi-stakeholderism in the Internet governance ecosystem into principles, in order to evaluate existing institutions and forums which are considered to be based on the same concept. In other words there is a need for a yardstick to measure levels of multi-stakeholderism which exists in different institutions. What are the criteria for a global institution to be recognized as a multistakeholder body? In this regard, India would like to reiterate that substantive participation from the developing world should be a key priority.

9.   Cyber Security: Cyber security assumes importance as more and more critical national infrastructures, especially in developing countries, become dependent on ICTs. States have a greater obligation than other stakeholders, since nation states are ultimately responsible for ensuring national security and guaranteeing personal safety. In this context, India recognizes the need for identifying issues which have a direct impact on national security, and the need for an enhanced role for governments in dealing with such issues. The Review should therefore build on the provisions of paragraphs 39, 44 and 45 of the Tunis Agenda.

10. Cyber Crime: Cyber crime includes hacking, cyber stalking, software piracy, disseminating malware, credit card fraud etc. India has enacted national legislation

contained in the Information Technology Act of 2000 (modified in 2008) for combating this problem. India favours a global framework, such as an International Convention for Legal Cooperation on Cyber Crime, which would harmonize effective international cooperation between member states in tackling cyber crime. The Review should build on the provisions of paragraph 40 of the Tunis Agenda to recommend the equitable participation of developing countries.

11. <u>Natural Disaster and Calamities</u>: In the last decade we have unfortunately witnessed and have been victim of natural disasters. The Tunis Agenda refers to the role of ICT and information society in disaster management. We need to take a step further and develop a global framework for the role of ICTs and the use of ICTs during such situations.

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

The High-Level Meeting should be consensus driven and should take into account response from all stakeholders. The High-Level Meeting should have specific outcomes while laying down specific commitments and obligations across all sectors and stakeholders.

V.   What shape should the outcome document take?

1.   The outcome document should be considered a "living document" which should be able to stand the test of time as well as evolve with the passage of time. It is important to note that no technical issue is devoid of policy implications, and likewise, no Internet policy can be framed without a deeper understanding of the technical issues of the underlying infrastructure. Keeping in mind that technology has developed rapidly in the last decade, the document should provide a scope for revisions and amendments with growing needs of the information society. The outcome document should also lay down certain guidelines or tests or standards for evaluating and reviewing multi-stakeholder bodies which are responsible for critical Internet resources and policy making on issues related to Internet governance.

2.   The outcome document should reflect the aspirations of the unconnected and the future of the Internet and its users. It should cover the needs and the ambitions under-represented and un-represented regions to achieve a truly global information society. The outcome document should capture the expectations of the developing countries while taking into account the issues related to bridging the digital divide in the next decade. Now, it is time address issues related to Bridging the Digital Divide v.2.0; whereas issues are not limited to building ICT infrastructure but also answer questions related to cyber security, equitable access, production of local content, and explore the use of open and unlicensed spectrum for deployment of access networks.

3.   The Outcome document should aim at addressing policy gaps. In this regard India, appreciates the CSTD Secretariat's work on developing the "Mapping of International Internet Public Policy Issues", as well as UNESCO's work on developing the "Study on access, freedom of expression, privacy and ethics" through multistakeholder dialogue and consultation.

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