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

Official Form for Comments on the Non-paper

A. Your Information

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Stakeholder Type[1]: Civil Society

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B. Formal Input

Please input your comments below:

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) welcomes the content of the WSIS+10 Review Non-Paper. We appreciate the paper's focus on tackling the digital divide that is unfortunately still with us. We also are pleased to see the continuing emphasis on the importance of ICT for development, and the recognition that the information society will play a critical role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. This is very much in line with IFLA's thinking, as we outlined in our earlier submission. While we feel that there could be more language around the importance of access to information for development the Non-Paper does partly reflect the position of the more than 580 organisations from across the library, development and technology sectors who have signed the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development (www.lyondeclaration.org).

However, from our perspective, there is still a need in the Non-Paper to explicitly reference the important role that public access to ICTs plays in achieving universal access to the Internet. Public access is clearly singled out as a key element of achieving WSIS goals in the WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS

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[1] When specifying your stakeholder type, please indicate one of the following: Government, Civil Society, Private Sector, Academia, and Technical Sector.

Outcomes[2] and the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015[3] and the UNESCO CONNECTing the Dots conference Outcome Document[4].

Not only does public access to the Internet through intermediaries such as libraries provide a mechanism for going online for those unable to even afford 'affordable' access, we also know through research that even in countries where mobile broadband penetration has reached very high levels, there is still a great need and demand for public access to ICTs – in South Africa for example, students still need library computers to complete homework assignments, or fill out job applications[5]. Libraries provide public access computers that are always in use.

Connected to this, we also believe that the reference to 'capabilities to make use of ICTs' in paragraph 12 of the Non-Paper is not strong enough. UNESCO's emphasis on the importance of media and information literacy (MIL[6]) should be utilised in this paragraph so that language from paragraph 12 of the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015[7] can be referenced.

Therefore we suggest an amendment to paragraph 12 of the Non-Paper which would ensure that public access and MIL is recognised. The paragraph would be split into two sentences, and the underlined text would be added:

12. Harnessing the potential of ICT for development requires truly equitable access for all. Priority should be given to ensuring that ICTs are affordable and relevant, <u>and that public access is available to those who need it</u>. Content should be available in different languages and formats that are accessible to all people, and for them <u>to have media and information literacy skills</u> to make use of ICTs.

Our second major concern regards the lack of any reference at all to the importance of culture in the information society. Without a focus on culture in the information society the Non-Paper is not as strong as it should be. Action Line C8 ('Cultural Diversity and Identify, Linguistic Diversity and Local Content') has been a key pillar of WSIS in the past ten years. Today the need to respect, preserve, promote and enhance cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural heritage within the Information Society must still be a priority – we live in an age where file-formats and data storage continuously cycle through platform migrations, improvements and obsolescence, leaving us unable to access our digital past. As we have previously stated, IFLA believes there must be more consideration given to phenomenon such bit-rot, or the short lifecycles of files. We are actively involved in the UNESCO PERSIST project which looks closely at solutions to guarantee long term sustainability of digital heritage[8]. Therefore the non-paper should recognize the importance of creating an enabling environment for access to digital cultural heritage. We suggest that language from the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015[9], along with influence from Target 11.4 of the SDGs which recognises the need to protect the world's cultural and natural heritage[10], could be used to craft a new paragraph 19 bis within the section 'ICT for Development':

19 bis. We recognise the importance of culture to development and affirm that cohesive, conceptual and

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[2] http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf (Page 14, paragraph 13; Page 17, Paragraph 7)
[3] http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf (Page 28, Paragraph 12; Page 30, paragraph 10; Page 31, Paragraph 22)
[4] http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome_document.pdf (Page 3, Paragraph 2.4)
[5] http://tascha.uw.edu/publications/public-libraries-connecting-people-for-development/
[6] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/mil-as-composite-concept/
[7] http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf (Page 30, Paragraph 12)
[8] http://unesco.nl/digital-sustainability
[9] http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf (Page 31, Paragraph 16)
[10] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf (Page 18, Target 11.4)

practical digital strategies are needed for the preservation of and access to recorded information in the digital environment in all its forms.

Finally, we must continue to affirm the importance of human rights in this document. It is essential to recognise that the vision of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society can only be realised if strongly underpinned by human rights, and we believe that the current doc does not recognise this sufficiently. Therefore we suggest the addition of a new paragraph 1 bis:

1bis: We reaffirm the importance of respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and UN Human Rights Council Resolution 20/8 to realise the WSIS vision.