

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

IMPLEMENTING WSIS OUTCOMES: A TEN-YEAR REVIEW



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PREFACE

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in 2003 and 2005, was the first major United Nations event devoted to the potential of information and communications technologies (ICTs), which have had such a marked impact on humanity over the past two decades. Its *Declaration of Principles*, agreed in Geneva in 2003, held out the vision of a ‘people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society,’ in which people could share knowledge, improve their quality of life, and achieve their full potential, within the framework of sustainable development and human rights. That vision has resonated ever more strongly in all countries, developed and developing, in the subsequent decade.



Major achievements have since occurred in ICTs. The number of mobile phone subscriptions worldwide is now almost equal to the number of people on the planet. As many as four out of 10 people in the world now make use of the Internet, and that number is growing steadily. Governments, business and civil society have used ICTs to improve the quality of service that they offer to citizens and consumers, and to support development objectives. Innovations such as mobile money, environmental monitoring and the use of information technology in health and education have had major impacts on the lives of individuals, communities and whole societies, contributing towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The past decade has also seen new developments in information technology, in new communications media and in the range of services which can be deployed through them. Today’s networks and devices are many times more capable than those available at the time of WSIS. Broadband networks, built with private and public finance, have enabled faster transmission of much larger volumes of data, transforming aspects of government and business practice. Social media platforms are used by more than a billion people to interact with and learn from others in their communities and around the world. Cloud computing is facilitating new business models and accelerating big data analysis, which can be used to enhance governance and service delivery. New devices, including smartphones and tablets, are spreading, while the Internet of Things promises another wave of innovation. No one doubts today that ICTs play an increasingly important part in economic, social and cultural development; that their role will continue to grow; and that they have the potential to fulfil the vision set out in the *Geneva Declaration*.

ICTs will be key enablers in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, and in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

But important challenges remain. While the digital divide in access to basic services between developed and developing countries, and within countries, has been greatly reduced since WSIS, substantial discrepancies still persist in terms of affordability, content and applications. New divides have emerged in access to broadband networks and services, and to the opportunities which they enable. New challenges have surfaced, in areas such as cyber security, human rights including the right to privacy, and the use of ICTs for criminal purposes. It is vital that the accelerating opportunities of new technologies do not result in a widening gap between developed, developing and least developed countries, or between rich and poor within societies. More effort is needed to ensure that women and girls benefit fully from the Information Society, that multilingual content increases, in particular content in languages that are currently under-represented on the Internet, and that everyone is able to acquire the skills and confidence needed to make full use of the ICTs that are available to them. More needs to be done, to achieve a common vision of the future of the Internet enabling all governments and other stakeholders to play their full part in its development.

The *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*, which was agreed in the second phase of the Summit in 2005, requested the United Nations General Assembly to make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) subsequently asked its Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to undertake a ten-year review of progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes and to submit its results in 2015, through the ECOSOC, to the General Assembly. This report has been prepared by the CSTD Secretariat in order to assist the Commission in that crucial task. It draws on existing reports and open consultation with all stakeholders to provide an overarching assessment.

I commend the work and am convinced that this report provides an excellent basis for the CSTD's review which, in turn, will contribute to the overall review by the General Assembly in December 2015. I also hope that its analysis and observations will help the General Assembly in integrating the ICT dimension effectively into the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "O. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "O" is large and loops around, and "Johnson" is written in a similar cursive script.

Ms. Omobola Johnson
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Technology for Development
Minister of Communication Technology
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Implementing WSIS Outcomes: A Ten-year Review was prepared by a team comprising Mervi Kultamaa, Claudia Contreras, and David Souter as the principal consultant. It was prepared under the direction of Anne Miroux, Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics of UNCTAD and Head of the CSTD Secretariat. The report benefited from comments and inputs from Torbjörn Fredriksson, Angel González-Sanz, Dong Wu and Arun Jacob. Stephanie Kermaal, Malou Pasinos and Vito Sestito extended administrative assistance at various stages of the preparations.

The report greatly benefited from the contributions of Governments, the United Nations entities and other international organizations, civil society organizations, technical and academic communities, the private sector and individuals who shared their views and experiences of the progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes during an open online consultation process from 27 June to 15 September 2014.

Additional inputs were received from stakeholders during consultation sessions which were organized in the context of the following international and regional events:

- WSIS+10 High Level Event (Geneva, June 2014);
- African Internet Governance Forum (Abuja, July 2014), the consultation was organized in collaboration with ECA;
- Ninth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) (Istanbul, September 2014), the consultation was organized in collaboration with ECLAC;
- Eighth ICT4All meeting (Tunis, September 2014), the consultation was organized in collaboration with ESCWA;
- World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2014 (Guadalajara, September 2014), the consultation was organized in collaboration with the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA);
- Fourth Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (Bangkok, October 2014), the consultation was organized in collaboration with ESCAP.

The CSTD secretariat is grateful to the United Nations Regional Commissions and all other entities which facilitated the organization of these sessions.

Valuable comments and suggestions to the draft report were provided by stakeholders at the Inter-sessional panel of the CSTD, held in Geneva from 26-28 November 2014.

Nadège Hadjémian designed the cover. *Implementing WSIS Outcomes: A Ten-year Review* was edited by Nancy Biersteker and formatted by Nathalie Lorient.

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