



Civil Society

Working Group on Financing Mechanisms

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DRAFT of a POSITION DOCUMENT concerning FINANCING MECHANISMS of INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES towards SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Contribution to the PrepCom2 WSIS Phase II

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Background

In front of the challenges generated by the extraordinary emergence of the ITC which affect all activity sectors, the international Community decided to convene a world summit to deal with this issue. The Organization of this summit was entrusted to the ITU. Its preparation innovated, in particular in two domains: on the one hand organizing the summit in two phases and two location, the first in Geneva by the end of 2003, the second in Tunis by the end of 2005, on the other hand, the implication in addition to States and their intergovernmental organization, of private operators and civil society, associated to all the stages of the process.

1 Results of the Geneva phase and challenges of the Tunis phase

It will be difficult to evaluate with objectivity the true performances of the Geneva phase of the WSIS as long as it is easy to justify now, a posteriori, that such or such underlined insufficiency was foreseeable and belonged from the beginning to the implicit mission of the second phase. In Geneva, the goals seemed clear: seeking ways and means to reduce the digital divide and to facilitate the access to communication and information technologies for development ITC4D. The participation was massive there, the security was rather dedicated, interpretation and translation were quite poor, as officially denounced during the closing ceremony by several governmental delegations.

Emerging and consequent means and dynamisms of private operators dominated the

exercise, supported and promoted by the UN-ITU, posing as a zealous champion of ultra liberalism, in particular with the means of public-private partnership (PPP). The civil society seems to be satisfied by the role assigned to her as an alibi, in the greatest organized disorder and destitution, conforming with the image of representation and defense of the interests of the large majority of the world population, surviving in misery and despair.

The Geneva meeting have been a remarkable show, a fair during which the interests of the dominant private operators, architects of the globalization process in general and "merchandisation of the human relations in particular were presented and effectively defended

The debates of the few relevant topics for the civil society were deferred for the meeting of Tunis such as those on governance, or financing mechanisms of the strategies, policies and action plans for the promotion of information and communication towards development.

The Tunis meeting could prove to be more difficult than the one of Geneva; so much the target is becoming more and more blurred, as more complex because having to lead to specific, operational, verifiable and agreeable proposals. The couple private operators - civil society has demonstrated its irrelevance impertinence and the limits of a fictitious solidarity. The credibility of the U.N. system in general and certain intergovernmental organizations in particular, already severely degraded in the past, has been hurt even more.

Tunis as a hosting place of the second phase of the WSIS Summit is debated in regards to the governmental policy and the lack of good governance, respect of the human rights and freedom of access to the means of communication which prevail in this country.

Draft of the recommendation N° 1 on the context of the WSIS

The various and relevant working groups of the civil society, trying to do their best in difficult conditions, with insufficient and disparate means, to promote a concerted position at the WSIS, must take into consideration the seriousness of the world situation and the difficult operating conditions. In contrast with the working groups of the governments, the intergovernmental organizations or the private operators, the groups of the civil society are the only ones not to have autonomous and sufficient means to support a minimum operational capacity. Their insidious and suicidal inclusion in such an approach promoted and brought into fashion by the U.N. System within the concept of the Private Public Partnership, whose ITU supported and which UNESCO has just followed with a recent agreement signed with Microsoft, constitutes a real danger of confusion and discredit.

We support the proposal (see meeting of Berlin, November 18-20, 2004, on the ITC and development) of the German civil society to create a working group on the working methods of the civil society and request this working group to improve coherence of work and the self-sufficiency of its initiatives compared to the other partners implied in the WSIS process.

2... The requirement of an assessment of financial needs before proceeding to any examination of mobilization mechanisms and distribution of resources.

To have the ambition to examine the relevance and the effectiveness of existing (or to be created) mechanisms for an adequate financing of the ITC for Development has a sense only if the volume of the indicative needs for financing were correctly estimated. It is going to displease all those who seek to minimize the challenge of the financing volume, at the advantage of a secondary debate even though useful, focused only quality, exemplarity, ease of control, follow-up and evaluation objectives, answering only to the concerns of donors. Procedures and mechanisms are only tools to reach out targets. However it is these objectives that require and legitimate adequate means for their implementation, within the shortest time-frames, and at the lowest costs, under control of the international community and not of one of the party.

Draft of recommendation N° 2 on the imperative subordination of the evaluation of financing mechanisms to the clarification and explanation of the targeted objectives.

The working groups of the civil society must, whatever their fields of competence, concentrate on the content they are wishing for a worldwide strategy towards sustainable development of information and communication technologies aiming at Sustainable Human Development. Each group in its own field should have to argue on the relevance of the issue consisting in promoting the effective and universal access to the ITC4D like a basic right to satisfy an essential need for information and communication towards individual and collective development. This basic and essential right to get informed and to be able to communicate is an indispensable condition in order to satisfy the other rights recognized by the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and by the whole apparatus that governs the relations of the international community, which may concern the right to dignity, education, health, sufficient food supply, decent housing, freedom or safety. One will never underline sufficiently but to defend his/her universal rights, the human being, in whatever situation he/she is facing, must be able to get informed and to be able to communicate in order to denounce insufficiencies, dysfunctions, and even failures or abuses.

Information and communication must be regarded as public goods on a worldwide scale (BPEM) and to be treated as such by the international community. The latter

will have to make of it a quality criterion in order to appreciate a good worldwide and or national governance (from memory, several governmental delegations asked during Geneva meeting on last 16 November, as well in the working group on the Finance mechanisms as in that of the friends of the president of the WSIS, that the scope of the debates in Tunis should be widened to include these important aspects of an approach to ITCs within the perspective of public goods.)

3 To prioritize the requirements of relevant answers for a fair fulfillment of the needs for ITC4D, before being concerned with profits of the private operators suppliers of goods and services.

If the civil society intends to be situated within a vision towards building a better world, a safe and progressive world of shared welfare, it must promote another idea of worldwide involvement and globalization, another image of the planetary village to build. Such steps incite to take into consideration the Digital Divide as the result of another divide, more global, which does not stop widening, between populations living in rich and poor countries. The objectives of the ITCs are only one component of the broader targets and more inclusive than those related to the emergency for the international community to answer to the intolerable situations of poverty, misery and despair from which its great majority is suffering, vegetating in poor countries. The market and the interests of the private operators cannot constitute reliable solutions, able to satisfy the needs for access of fragile, poor, rural or wedged populations. The logics of individual, local, national or regional answers are insufficient and the colossal needs which justify strategies of worldwide regulation, for promoting global programs of international co-operation and inter-sectorial development.

Draft of recommendation N° 3 on the imperative subordination of the objectives of ITC4D to those on sustainable human development.

The Civil Society working group on financing mechanisms of ITC4D requests that evaluation and proposal works of the civil society, whatever their competences, must be confronted with those agreed by competent authorities from the international community during previous world summits, in particular those retained by Millennium (Millennium Development Goals, New York 2000). The financing mechanisms of the ITCs must be in adequacy with those financing under development and poverty. The initiatives such as Solidarity Digital Funds which abound, whatever useful they might be, are relevant only if they are included and reinforce financing mechanisms of underdevelopment and more especially those having to verify that engagements of public development assistance or Official Development Assistance (ODA), are sufficient and are respected by the governments

of rich countries. Within these quantifiable and verifiable volumes of financing, the development of ITC4D, articulated with that of other branches of activities, should be able to benefit from the mechanisms, likely to exist already, even if they must be the subject of consequent reforms in their organization and in their management, of mobilization and allocation of the resources, in a transparent manner and while respecting a worldwide good governance which should take precedence over the conditions set by bilateral and multilateral donors.

A worldwide good governance remains a concept to be created and the architecture of the institutions that manage our world should be re-examined accordingly. The serious reform of the United Nations system that everybody is waiting for should constitute an opportunity to revise, gather and if necessary enlarge the mandates of the institution or institutions in charge of the ITC sector. By supporting the dominant multinationals in the ITC sector, the UN-ITU surely demonstrated its incompetence in the field of international co-operation in telecommunications. On its side, UNESCO proved its inefficiency to defend its mandate concerning information development and is satisfied to play a minor role in the Summit. Other intergovernmental at international or regional levels and with various statutes have to be revisited for a better coordination and for making the whole set more coherent (the ONPI, the UCANN, Africa One, RASCOM, PANAFTEL, NEPAD, FSNs and others...).

Elements of conclusion:

The task is immense and the time frame before Tunis Summit is insufficient to transform those general analyses into proposals for actions. That means that debates and fights shall continue after Tunis and this will require the continuation of the civil society mobilization concerning the mechanisms of evaluation and follow-up of the decisions agreed at the Tunis Summit.

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