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Economic and Social Council

Substantive session of 2012
Agenda item 13 (*b*)

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council

[*on the recommendation of the Commission on Science and Technology
for Development (E/2012/31 and Corr.1)*]

2012/5. Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,[1]

Recalling also its resolution 2006/46 of 28 July 2006 on the follow-up to the World Summit and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the mandate that it gave to the Commission,

Recalling further its resolution 2011/16 of 26 July 2011 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/184 of 22 December 2011 on information and communications technologies for development,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2]

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Improvements and innovations in existing financing mechanisms: information and communication technology for development",[3]

Noting the submission by the Commission of the report entitled "Implementing WSIS outcomes: experience to date and prospects for the future"[4] as an information document,

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[1] See A/C.2/59/3, annex, and A/60/687.

[2] A/67/66-E/2012/49.

[3] E/CN.16/2010/3.

[4] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, document UNCTAD/DTL/STICT/2011/3.

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Expressing its appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for his role in helping to ensure completion of the aforementioned reports in a timely manner,

Taking stock: reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

1.   *Notes* the ongoing implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,[1] emphasizing, in particular, its multi-stakeholder nature, the roles played in this regard by leading agencies as action line facilitators and the roles of the regional commissions and the United Nations Group on the Information Society, and expresses its appreciation for the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the World Summit;

2.   *Takes note* of the reports of many United Nations entities, with their respective executive summaries, submitted as input for the elaboration of the annual report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Commission, and published on the website of the Commission as mandated in Council resolution 2007/8 of 25 July 2007, and recalls the importance of close coordination among the leading action line facilitators and with the secretariat of the Commission;

3.   *Notes* the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional level facilitated by the regional commissions, as observed in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2] including the steps taken in this respect, and emphasizes the need to continue to address issues of specific interest to each region, focusing on the challenges and obstacles that each may be facing with regard to the implementation of all goals and principles established by the World Summit, with particular attention to information and communications technology for development;

4.   *Reiterates* the importance of maintaining a process of coordinating the multi-stakeholder implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit through effective tools, with the goal of exchanging information among action line facilitators, identifying issues that need improvement and discussing the modalities of reporting on the overall implementation process, encourages all stakeholders to continue to contribute information to the stocktaking database maintained by the International Telecommunication Union on the implementation of the goals established by the World Summit, and invites United Nations entities to update information on their initiatives in the stocktaking database;

5.   *Highlights* the urgent need for the incorporation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit in the revised guidelines for United Nations country teams on preparing the common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including the addition of an information and communications technology for development component;

6.   *Notes with satisfaction* the holding in Geneva, from 14 to 18 May 2012, of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2012, organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Programme, as a multi-stakeholder platform for the coordination of implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit and to facilitate the implementation of the World Summit action lines;

7.   *Calls upon* all States, in building the information society, to take steps to avoid and to refrain from taking any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries and that hinders their well-being;

8.   *Welcomes* the progress highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General,[2] in particular the fact that the rapid growth in mobile telephony since 2005 has meant that more than half of the world's inhabitants will have access to information and communications technologies within their reach, in line with one of the World Summit targets, the value of this progress being enhanced by the advent of new services and applications, including m-health, mobile transactions, e-government, e-business and development services, which offer great potential for the development of the information society;

9.   *Notes with great concern* that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies and that, for the majority of the poor, the promise of science and technology, including information and communications technologies, remains unfulfilled, and emphasizes the need to effectively harness technology, including information and communications technologies, to bridge the digital divide;

10.   *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity, as well as issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and transfer of technology to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries;

11.   *Also recognizes* the rapid growth in broadband access networks, especially in developed countries, and notes with concern that there is a growing digital divide in the availability, affordability, quality of access and use of broadband between high-income countries and other regions, with least developed countries and Africa as a continent lagging behind the rest of the world;

12.   *Further recognizes* that the transition to a mobile-led communications environment is leading to significant changes in operators' business models and that it requires significant rethinking of the ways in which individuals and communities make use of networks and devices, of government strategies and of ways in which communications networks can be used to achieve development objectives;

13.   *Recognizes* that, even with all the developments and the improvement observed in some respects, in numerous developing countries information and communications technologies and their applications are still not affordable to the majority of people, particularly those living in rural areas;

14.   *Also recognizes* that the number of Internet users is growing and that in some instances the digital divide is also changing in character, from one based on whether access is available to one based on the quality of access, information and skills that users can obtain and the value they can derive from it, and recognizes in this regard that there is a need to prioritize the use of information and communications technologies through innovative approaches, including multi-stakeholder approaches, within national and regional development strategies;

15.   *Welcomes* the outcomes of the Broadband Leadership Summit, hosted by the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in Geneva on 24 and 25 October 2011 as a unique event that united key decision makers and helped to foster relationships and policies to boost the roll-out and deployment of broadband;

16.   *Notes* that, while a solid foundation for capacity-building in information and communications technology has been laid in many areas with regard to building the information society, there is still a need for continuing efforts to address the ongoing challenges, especially for developing countries and the least developed countries, and draws attention to the positive impact of broadened capacity development that involves institutions, organizations and entities dealing with information and communications technologies and Internet governance issues;

17.   *Recognizes* the need to focus on capacity development policies and sustainable support to further enhance the impact of activities and initiatives at the national and local levels aimed at providing advice, services and support with a view to building an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society;

18.   *Notes* that topics that were not central at the first and second phases of the World Summit in 2003 and 2005 continue to emerge, such as the potential of information and communications technologies to combat climate change, social networking, virtualization and cloud computing, the protection of online privacy and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyberexploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;

19.   *Reiterates* the importance of information and communications technology indicators as a monitoring and evaluation tool for measuring the digital divide among countries and within societies and in informing decision makers when formulating policies and strategies for social, cultural and economic development, and emphasizes that the standardization and harmonization of reliable and regularly updated indicators capturing the performance, efficiency, affordability and quality of goods and services is essential for implementing information and communications technology policies;

Internet governance

20.   *Reaffirms* paragraph 20 of its resolution 2011/16 and General Assembly resolution 66/184;

21.   *Also reaffirms* paragraphs 34 to 37 and 67 to 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society;[5]

Enhanced cooperation

22.   *Recalls* that, in resolution 66/184, the General Assembly invited the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to convene, in conjunction with the fifteenth session of the Commission, a one-day open, inclusive and interactive meeting involving all Member States and other stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, including the private sector, civil society and international organizations, with a view to identifying a shared understanding of enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, in accordance with paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Tunis Agenda, and

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[5] See A/60/687.

requested the Secretary-General to include information on the outcome of the meeting when preparing his report on the status of the implementation of and follow-up to the resolution;

23. *Notes* the holding of the open consultations on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, convened by the Chair of the Commission in Geneva on 18 May 2012;

24. *Decides* to forward, for information purposes, the report of the Chair of the Commission on the outcome of the meeting to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, while noting that there is no consensus on the accuracy and balance of how the views expressed in the meeting are reflected in the report;

Internet Governance Forum

25. *Notes* that the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum has successfully completed its task;

26. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Working Group,[6] and expresses its gratitude to all members of the Working Group for their time and valuable efforts in this endeavour, as well as to all Member States and other relevant stakeholders that submitted inputs to the Working Group consultation process;

The road ahead

27. *Urges* United Nations entities still not actively cooperating in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit through the United Nations system to take the necessary steps and commit to a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, and to catalyse the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[7]

28. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to keep the goal of bridging the digital divide, in its different forms, an area of priority concern, put into effect sound strategies that contribute to the development of e-government and continue to focus on pro-poor information and communications technology policies and applications, including access to broadband at the grass-roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divide among and within countries;

29. *Urges* all stakeholders to prioritize the development of innovative approaches that will stimulate the provision of universal access to affordable broadband infrastructure for developing countries and the use of relevant broadband services in order to ensure the development of an inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred information society, and to minimize the digital divide;

30. *Calls upon* international and regional organizations to continue to assess and report on a regular basis on the universal accessibility of nations to information and communications technologies, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of the information and communications technology sectors of developing countries;

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[6] A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1.
[7] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

31. *Urges* all countries to make concrete efforts to fulfil their commitments under the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development;[8]

32. *Calls upon* United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums, in accordance with the outcomes of the World Summit, to periodically review and modify the methodologies for information and communications technology indicators, taking into account different levels of development and national circumstances, and therefore:

(*a*) Notes with appreciation the work of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development;

(*b*) Calls upon the Partnership to further its work on measuring the impact of information and communications technologies, particularly in developing countries, by creating practical guidelines, methodologies and indicators;

(*c*) Notes the holding, in Pailles, Mauritius, from 7 to 9 December 2011, of the ninth World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Meeting, which enhanced the capacity of Governments in the collection of relevant data at the national level on information and communications technologies;

(*d*) Calls upon United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums to study the implications of the current world economic situation on information and communications technology deployment, in particular connectivity through broadband, and its economic sustainability;

(*e*) Encourages Governments to collect relevant data at the national level on information and communications technologies, to share information about country case studies and to collaborate with other countries in capacity-building exchange programmes;

(*f*) Encourages United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums to promote assessment of the impact of information and communications technologies on poverty and in key sectors to identify the knowledge and skills needed to boost impacts;

(*g*) Calls upon international development partners to provide financial support to further facilitate capacity-building and technical assistance in developing countries;

33. *Invites* the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to support the review and assessment work of the Commission regarding follow-up to the World Summit, while acknowledging with appreciation the financial support provided by the Governments of Finland and Switzerland to this fund;

34. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on a yearly basis, a report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in Council resolutions on the assessment of the quantitative and qualitative progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit;

35. *Urges* the Secretary-General to ensure the continued functioning of the Internet Governance Forum and its structures in preparation for the seventh meeting of the Forum, to be held in Baku from 6 to 9 November 2012, and future meetings of the Forum;

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[8] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18–22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

36. *Notes* the need to appoint the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Internet Governance and the Executive Coordinator of the Internet Governance Forum;

37. *Recalls* paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda, in which the General Assembly was requested to make an overall review of the implementation of World Summit outcomes in 2015, and paragraph 106 of the Tunis Agenda, according to which the World Summit implementation and follow-up should be an integral part of the United Nations integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences;

38. *Also recalls* paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 66/184, in which the Assembly reaffirmed its role in the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, to be held by the end of 2015, as recognized in paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda, and decided to consider the modalities for this review process at its sixty-seventh session;

39. *Notes* the open and inclusive consultation process of the United Nations Group on the Information Society that has been taking place on the overall review of the implementation of the World Summit outcomes, and also notes the role of the Commission, set forth in Council resolution 2006/46, in assisting the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit;

40. *Recommends* that, consistent with the World Summit process and subject to the decision by the General Assembly, an appropriate preparatory process should be launched, drawing from the experience of the two phases of the World Summit;

41. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report on the stocktaking of activities related to the World Summit, which serves as one of the valuable tools for assisting with the follow-up, beyond the conclusion of the Tunis phase of the World Summit;

42. *Reiterates* the importance of sharing best practices at the global level, and, while recognizing excellence in the implementation of the projects and initiatives that further the goals of the World Summit, encourages all stakeholders to nominate their projects for the annual World Summit Project Prizes as an integral part of the World Summit stocktaking process, while taking note of the report on the World Summit success stories;

43. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts of the United Nations Group on the Information Society directed towards incorporation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit in the revised guidelines for United Nations country teams on preparing the common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including the addition of an information and communications technology for development component;

44. *Recognizes* the enabling role of information and communications technologies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and reiterates the importance of the contribution of the World Summit process to the achievement of the Goals.

43rd plenary meeting
24 July 2012

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