

Civil Society Response on the PrepCom Sub-Committee Agreement of Rules of Procedure. July 4th Endorsed Version

We appreciate the huge effort from all parties in reaching a formal agreement on the PrepCom Rules of Procedures. We will continue to engage constructively in the process, as the details and further decisions emerge. The following are initial considerations on the agreement.

General Parameters of Stakeholder Accreditation.

First, a matter of great importance. Based on the many declarations, civil society had early high expectations that the WSIS offered an opportunity to innovate in modalities for participation of all stakeholders. The starting point for civil society was that the WSIS must build on acquired rights and practices of participation in UN Summits, and could not erode or dilute these. In the most optimistic interpretation, this agreement represents a variation on established practices, but little in the way of positive innovation, such as those resulting from the UNESCO series of consultations with civil society and private sector organisations (see PrepCom document WSIS/PC-1/CONTR/1, pp 29-30), and from the Bamako Regional Conference (Document WSIS/PC-1/Doc/7 p2).

Unfortunately, and depending on how the agreement is interpreted, the only possible innovation is an unwelcome one. It is found in wording in Rule 55 and Annex II on modalities. These suggest that individual business enterprises will be accredited with the same nature and level of participation as NGOs. This would be of major concern. The private sector has always been capably represented by its associations, which is a long established and necessary practice. A decision to include individual commercial actors in this manner in a UN summit, without the appropriate discussion, reference to established procedures and decisions, would be unprecedented and of concern to the entire UN system. Our response to this disturbing development must await clarification and the deliberations on accreditation procedures.

Proposed Rules and Modalities

We are naturally very disappointed that the broader framework offered by Option B in Rule 55 was not approved. However, the proposals in the document for participation are welcomed as potentially constructive and useful modalities. A degree of flexibility that is retained, which is welcomed, must be fully exercised in the direction of supporting participation if this potential is to be realised.

The capacity of these proposals to support effective participation of civil society will depend on both solid commitment and open cooperation of all participants, and on the practicalities and concrete circumstances of their implementation. This must mean maximum participation of civil society in the design and implementation of these modalities, and in the related formal and informal activities. Such activities include (but are not restricted to) the determination of the timing, location, representation, duration, and selection of Chairs of Round Tables, and other events; and the nature, extent and determination of participation and participants.

Furthermore, the proposed modalities cannot yield balanced and effective participation of civil society without transparent, efficient mechanisms for attracting and distributing funds, from a variety of sources. Relevant actors in the Summit must commit levels of funding appropriate to the need for balanced and effective participation during PrepComs and Summits, and between them. This will be the subject of a further communiqué.

There are other questions of interpretation that render it difficult to draw a definitive conclusion. We will seek to clarify these without delay, and so respond more conclusively.

Civil society itself will also be obliged to follow through fully on the responsibilities implied in this, to continue to organise in good faith in a constructive, transparent, participative and effective manner. We will continue to respond to ongoing developments, and will hopefully be in a position to draw conclusions by the end of the PrepCom.

This statement is endorsed by the following:

- Abantu for Development
- AEGEE - Europe
- ALAI
- ALER - Asociación Latinoamericana de

Educación Radiofónica

- AMARC Africa
- AMARC International
- ANAIS AC
- APC Association for Progressive

Communications

- APC Africa
- Association Tunisienne de la Communication

ATUCOM

- ATUSUT (Association Tunisienne des Services Universels des

Télécommunications)

- BHN Association
- Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University
- Carrefour Mondial de l'Internet Citoyen
- Collectif d'Appui et d'Assistance Technique

Approchée (CAATR)

- Communities Online
- Community Media Network
- Computer Association of Nepal
- Comunica
- Conseil Mondial de la Radio-Television
- Consumer Federation of America
- CPSR - Computer Professionals for Social

Responsibility

- CREIS – Centre de coordination pour la

Recherche et l'Enseignement en

Informatique et Société

- CRIS Campaign
- ETIC Nord-Sud
- Federation Internationale des Associations

Multimedia (FIAM)

- Federation of American Women's Clubs

Overseas: FAWCO

- FEMNET
- Foundation for Media Alternatives, Philippines
- FUNREDES
- Global Community Networking Partnership

(GCNP)

- GLOCOM
- IFRI
- Institut Panos Afrique de l'Ouest
- Instituto del Tercer Mundo (ITEM)
- International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)
- International Council for Caring Communities
- International Possibilities Unlimited
- International Women's Tribune Centre

(IWTC)

- Internet Society (ISOC)
- InterNews
- IPV: IusPrimi Viri International Association
- IRIS – Imaginons un Réseau Internet Solidaire

– France

- ISIS International – Manila
- ISOC-Mali
- Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
- Media Institute of Southern Africa
- NEXUS Research Cooperative
- Nile Basic Society, Canada
- OneWorld
- Pacific Telecommunications Council
- Pain pour le prochain – Bread for all
- Panos Institute
- SwissMedia: Association Future du

Multimedia

- Taking IT Global
- Telecommunities Canada
- Transparency International
- World Association for Christian

Communication

- World Federalist Movement
- Worldview International Foundation/Mandate the Future
- Youth Caucus

... and the list is growing.