

**CIVIL SOCIETY COORDINATION GROUP**  
**Letter to WSIS Executive Director**  
**About the Civil Society Fellowship Allocation Process for PrepCom2**

To: Pierre Gagné, Executive Director  
WSIS Secretariat

Copies:  
Adama Samassekou, Chair, WSIS Preparatory Process,  
Alain Clerc, Director, Civil Society Division, WSIS Secretariat,  
Members of the civil society plenary

Dear Mr Gagné,

We are writing you as Civil Society Sub Committee on Participation, created by the Civil Society Plenary Group and mandated by the Civil Society Coordinating Group. Civil society organizations have received on January 13th, 2003, an information and a request for fellowships from the Civil Society Secretariat. We welcome the establishment of a Civil Society Facilitation Fund, which we have requested for a long time as the only mean to ensure balanced and effective participation of civil society in the WSIS process, especially regarding the participation of groups from least developed countries. We still however would like to raise the following concerns regarding this Civil Society Facilitation Fund and the allocation procedure for fellowships.

**On the categories of candidates who may apply:**

Although we agree that "Civil society" is a hard to define notion, it covers, for the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, entities of the third sector, distinct from the State and from the private sector. Given this definition, and considering the limited number of available fellowships, we consider that the categories of candidates should be limited to NGOs, social groups and social movements.

**On the selection criteria:**

While the criteria for a balanced participation are quite reasonable, we consider that the categories of the candidates' roles in their home country may go beyond NGOs and civil society groups' general roles. To say the least, NGOs and civil society groups seldom act as "decision-makers". We recommend that the relevance of applications should be examined with regards to the sole criteria of acting in the field of Information society. In this respect, the fact that the organization of the candidate is accredited to the WSIS preparatory process is not only sufficient, but also necessary for the participation of the candidate to PrepCom2.

**On the selection process:**

Since the deadline for application is January 25th, 2003, we are wondering how the selection panel, said to be composed by members of the Civil Society, will be itself selected. As a matter of fact, neither the Civil Society Plenary Coordinating Group, nor its relevant Sub Committee on Participation has been approached till now in this regard.

**On the obligations of fellowship participants:**

We are very surprised by the listed obligations, specially the ones stating that participants must "conduct themselves at all times in a manner compatible with their responsibility as holders of WSIS fellowships" and "refrain from engaging in political, commercial and any other activities incompatible with the WSIS PrepCom2".

First of all, we consider that participating in the WSIS process is a political activity in itself, thus refraining from it would mean not even attending PrepComs.

Second, we are wondering what could be a "responsibility as holders of WSIS fellowships" and a conduct incompatible with this responsibility.

Third, we don't have any information of the "instructions issued by Fellowships Service", that the candidates should comply with.

Fourth, it seems that these obligations are stated according to ITU templates, while WSIS is a UN Summit, and should thus only follow UN rules.

For these reasons, and in the name of the Civil Society Plenary Group that currently number hundreds of organizations, we protest against these obligations which bring discredit upon NGOs and civil society groups, and we urge you to drop them from the list of obligations.

**On the information requested from applicants:**

The fellowship application form requests a great deal of personal information, and this raises privacy concerns, especially since there is no clear privacy policy statement. Place of birth and passport details (number, issuing location, date, etc.) are highly sensitive information. While we understand passport details will be needed if a visa is required and, for some countries, for flight tickets booking, they are by no mean necessary when examining an application for fellowship. Furthermore, if the Secretariat is to share this information with governments and/or national or international agencies, this may lead to serious privacy infringement according to national and international legislation.

We urge you to address these concerns to facilitate the participation of NGOs and civil society groups to PrepCom2 and subsequent WSIS events in an open, transparent, and safe manner.

On Behalf of the Civil Society Plenary Group and its Coordinating Group,  
The CS Sub Committee on Participation.

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