



UNGA WSIS Review Side Event

BUILDING ON WSIS+10: PUTTING KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES AT THE HEART OF THE 2030 AGENDA

UNHQ Conference Room 12

15 December, 13.15-14:45

UNESCO is the United Nations' lead agency concerned with education, sciences, culture, communication and information. It has played a central role in the WSIS process and the development of Knowledge Societies, supporting the implementation of WSIS outcomes through its own programmes and by facilitating six of the WSIS Action Lines. It has critical responsibilities in the implementation of the UN's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This meeting has been called to focus attention on UNESCO's priorities and plans to support the development of Knowledge Societies post-2015.

What are UNESCO's objectives for putting Knowledge Societies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda?

Knowledge Societies are societies in which people have the fundamental right and the capabilities, not just to acquire information, but also to create it and transform it into knowledge and understanding. These are necessary to empower them to enhance their livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities and countries.

Knowledge Societies build on the diverse cultures and experiences of different countries and communities. They are evolving rapidly as a result of technological innovation and the growing reach of networks and services throughout the world. They require connectivity *and* capability, freedom of expression – which includes press freedom and the right to information, content *and* cultural diversity, inclusive governance and human rights. They represent transformations in the way that economies and societies work, as well as carrying the potential for accelerating progress towards sustainable development.

The Internet is at the heart of Knowledge Societies. UNESCO's goal of **Internet Universality**, endorsed at its General Conference in November 2015, points to four fundamental principles that can optimise the Internet in terms of its contribution to knowledge societies. These are the ROAM principles, saying that the Internet should be:

- **Rights-based**
- **Open**
- **Accessible to all, and**
- **Multistakeholder in its governance and development.**

These four principles are essential to ensuring that the Internet supports the emergence of the 'people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented' vision of the future, which was set out at WSIS. They constitute a powerful package of the ingredients that are essential to the emergence of Knowledge Societies that work for the benefit of all.

UNESCO's 38th General Conference agreed 38 options ¹ for action built around the ROAM principles, and has forwarded these to the WSIS Review process. The options are focused in particular on

¹ The resolution of document 38 C/53 (Item 4.13) was adopted by consensus without amendment, see http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002340/234090e.pdf#xml=http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=gctd&set=005661A411_1_364&hits_rec=7&hits_lng=eng

access to information and knowledge, freedom of expression, privacy and the ethical dimension of the Information Society. They cover issues such as multilingualism online, media and information literacy, safety of journalists, encryption and anonymity.

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** was agreed by the United Nations in September 2015. It sets out overarching universal goals for human development over the next fifteen years, which include goals for Internet access as well as for public access to information and fundamental freedoms. Enormous changes will also take place within that period in the capabilities and reach of ICTs, with transforming effects on the acquisition and sharing of information and its impact on every aspect of human life. Many of those changes will support the achievement of sustainable development and human rights, while others may be threatening to them. Building inclusive Knowledge Societies, including an Internet based on the ROAM principles, will be crucial to UNESCO's contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The **WSIS+10 outcome document** from this week's General Assembly review will set the framework for UN action that brings together WSIS goals, the SDGs and this year's other international agreements on financing for development and climate change.

UNESCO's central role in this context is to advance human progress towards inclusive Knowledge Societies that enhance development and rights through inclusive access to information and knowledge, through education, sciences, communication and information and through respect for cultural diversity. UNESCO works as a laboratory of ideas, generates policy analysis and advice, develops institutional and human capacities and strengthens international and regional cooperation, for example by fostering alliances, intellectual cooperation, knowledge sharing and operational partnerships. It will seek to fulfil its role by:

- Putting the achievement of inclusive Knowledge Societies at the heart of its own work to implement the SDGs and outcomes of the WSIS+10 review, including in its work with partners;
- Building a stronger understanding of the impact of Knowledge Societies, and of rapidly changing ICT environments, by analysing the impact of ICTs in its areas of core competence;
- Promoting the ROAM principles of Internet Universality in partnership with other Internet stakeholders, and developing indicators for these; and
- Working with partners within and outside the UN system, from all stakeholder communities, to provide expert advice, share experience, create new fora for dialogue, and foster the development and empowerment of users.

The UNESCO side event on 15 December, during the General Assembly WSIS+10 High Level Meeting, is an important first step towards the Organization's programme of work to put Knowledge Societies at the heart of the Sustainable Development Agenda, following the completion of the WSIS+10 review. Each of the panellists at the meeting will respond to a particular aspect of that process. UNESCO will then be asking four questions of everyone that takes part:

- What actions will you or your organisation be taking in regard to the Internet's contribution to inclusive and diverse Knowledge Societies, as set out by UNESCO?
- What are your top priorities for Knowledge Societies and fulfilment of WSIS+10 outcomes in UNESCO's core mandates of education, sciences, culture, communication and information, based on human rights?
- What partnership with UNESCO would help you to pursue your objectives?
- How can we work together to build Internet Universality?