

# UNGIS Joint Statement on the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the WSIS Forum 2013



UNGIS Chairs and Vice-Chairs



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## Joint Statement

# United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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*In keeping with its mandate to promote policy coherence and programme coordination in the UN system, as well as provide guidance on issues related to inclusive Knowledge Societies and especially on information and communications technologies (ICTs) in support of internationally agreed development goals, the 30 members of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) respectfully submit this joint statement to the UN Secretary General and the UN Task Team. The statement is a collective contribution to the dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, a unified effort to harness inter-agency expertise and experience to support deliberations on Post-2015 priorities, and a united commitment to a UN community poised to address development challenges in the 21st century.*

1. When the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established in 2000, the international community was only beginning to understand the catalytic potential of ICTs to advance development agendas and priorities. One of the targets under Goal 8 calls for making the benefits of technologies, particularly ICTs, available to all. Two years before the deadline for achieving the MDGs, Target 18 seems achievable by 2015 when it comes to access to mobile services. However, the potential of ICTs as key enablers for inclusive development have yet to be fully acknowledged, harnessed and specifically linked to the achievement of all other MDG targets.
2. In 2003 and 2005, at the two phases of the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS), the international community agreed on a set of commitments that recognize ICTs as enablers for development. World leaders representing Governments, civil society, private sector and the technical community set out a strategic framework for their deployment and use with the engagement of and in partnership with multi-sectoral stakeholders. This framework captures the potential of ICTs in enhancing access, especially of vulnerable populations, to education, health care and other public services, to information, finance and knowledge, and the role of ICTs for the protecting the environment, for mitigating natural disaster risks, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable food production and for women's empowerment. This is in line with the internationally-agreed development goals in general and with environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources in particular, as mentioned in both the Rio Principles and Agenda 21. In this context it is important to note that there is an existing UN goal for the post-2015 sustainable development era that already addresses a key component of the information society. UNGIS was established in 2006 to ensure coherence in the implementation of these commitments across the UN system<sup>1</sup>.
3. Thirteen years since the UN Millennium Summit and ten years after WSIS 2003, the ICT landscape has changed dramatically. Rapid innovation, diffusion and uptake of mobile technologies and improved access to the Internet have greatly expanded the gamut of opportunities that ICTs offer to promote inclusive development. As demonstrated by the ongoing overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, international cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaboration on the strategic use of ICTs to address a wide range of issues during the past decade has produced a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise – valuable resources that should be fully harnessed by the UN system as it defines a new development agenda for the coming decades. Today we know that:
  - 3.1 ICTs provide a platform to better integrate and accelerate delivery on all three pillars of sustainable development – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.
  - 3.2 ICTs in general, and the Internet in particular, play an important part in ensuring rights-based development, especially enabling wider exercise of freedom of expression and press freedom, which in turn are critical to combating corruption, ensuring gender-sensitivity, deepening accountability, and promoting socially inclusive development.
  - 3.3 ICTs have become critical drivers and essential tools for the creation of jobs and the delivery of basic public services, for improving access to knowledge and education, for empowering women, enhancing transparency, and for giving marginalized populations a voice in decision-making processes that directly affect their own lives.
  - 3.4 ICTs play a transformative role in governance and institutional development at the global, regional, national and local levels, which are essential for sustainable development.
  - 3.5 Regional cooperation, through the sharing of best practices, policies, experience that can pro-actively facilitate mutually beneficial solutions that are particularly relevant to a given regional context.
  - 3.6 The enabling power of ICTs can greatly enhance the technical effectiveness of development work, as well as the way in which common objectives are defined, set, monitored and achieved.

- 3.7 Most importantly, ICTs by themselves cannot guarantee the achievement of development goals. Strategic policies, human capacity, appropriate knowledge management, relevant content development, infrastructure deployment, and an enabling environment are critical factors to ensure that the potential of ICTs for sustainable development is fully harnessed by and for all.
- 3.8 Affordable access to ICTs will continue to transform people's lives, as this enables people to empower themselves, their communities and their societies. Despite the significant progress made to date, inequalities in access to ICT networks/infrastructure, education and technological progress and to innovation systems remain vast, within and between countries. Significant threats and risks, important digital and knowledge divides, including around gender, remain. They need to be addressed pro-actively, hand in hand with non-technology related barriers, in order to achieve an inclusive and a people-centred Information Society.

#### 4. UNGIS therefore proposes that:

- 4.1 **The potential of ICTs as key enablers of development, and as critical components of innovative development solutions, is fully recognized in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.** Taking into account the importance of relevant content, skills and an enabling environment, ICTs, including broadband Internet, mobile technologies and relevant ICT applications, should be fully recognized as tools that can help empower people, enable wider exercise of human rights including freedom of expression, foster access to information, open up employment opportunities, expand access to learning, education, and basic services. In collaboration with other stakeholders, the UN system should seek to take full advantage of ICTs in addressing the development challenges of the 21st century and to recognize them as cross-cutting enablers for the achievement of all three pillars of sustainable development.
  - 4.2 **The Post-2015 Development Agenda reflects lessons learned during the past decade in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.** UNGIS urges building on what has been learned on the potential of ICTs since the MDGs were established in 2000, specially acknowledging that WSIS 2003/2005 has galvanized significant international cooperation and collaboration on ICTs as enablers for development.
  - 4.3 **Interaction between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the WSIS+10 Review processes be established to create synergies.** Such interaction is important to ensure that efforts across the UN System are coherent, connected and coordinated to achieve maximum, sustainable impact.
5. **UNGIS stands ready to assist the implementation of the recommendations made above.** UNGIS -- with its 30 members -- offers a valuable knowledge and resource base that has been developed in the past decade on a multi-stakeholder basis focusing on innovative tools and approaches to tackle multiple development challenges. This knowledge and resource base can help inform the setting of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. UNGIS can provide assistance particularly in the following ways:
- 5.1 Consultative engagement with the bodies tasked to shepherd the post-2015 process, including by providing substantive expertise in support of the Open Working Group as it starts to frame proposals to the General Assembly.
  - 5.2 Making experts available to Member States through their Permanent Representatives to the UN, specifically as they reflect on lessons learned in the past 10 years in WSIS.
  - 5.3 Consultative engagement with all relevant groups within the UN system, including at the regional level and within the UN Development Group, to facilitate the effective integration of ICT-enhanced, innovative development solutions in their own frameworks.
6. In keeping with its mandate, UNGIS is committed to both support the UN community as it frames the post-2015 Development Agenda and help deliver on the new set of goals by ensuring policy and programme coherence, and providing guidance on the central role of ICTs in development.

#### Members of UNGIS

FAO, IAEA, ILO, ITU\*, OECD, UN Women, UNCTAD\*, UNDESA\*, UNDP\*, UNECA, UNECE, UNECLAC, UNESCAP, UNESCO\*\*, UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNODC, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WB, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

\*\*UNESCO is UNGIS' 2013 Chair

\*ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP and UNDESA (2013) are UNGIS' Vice-chairs

#### About UNGIS

UNGIS serves as an interagency mechanism, which aims at coordinating substantive and policy issues facing the United Nations system's implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society, thereby contributing to improving policy coherence in the UN system, as requested by the 2005 World Summit. Subsequently, UNGIS ensures coordination within the United Nations development system to respond to the international attention being given to science and technology and technology transfer as reflected by the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit.

Following the recommendations of its 9th UNGIS meeting that took place in UNESCO Paris in the framework of the first WSIS+10 Review in February 2013, UNGIS agreed to present a Joint Statement to ensure that ICTs, applications and services, be underlined and included prominently in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. More information on UNGIS can be found at: [www.ungis.org](http://www.ungis.org), or email us at: [contact@ungis.org](mailto:contact@ungis.org)