



**Meeting of legislators, civil society representatives and experts from
Latin America and the Caribbean**

**The challenges of the Internet: governance and ethical dimensions of the
information society – towards an integrated agenda for
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Declaration of Santo Domingo

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

26-27 November 2015

Preamble

We, the participants in the meeting of legislators, civil society representatives and experts from Latin America and the Caribbean, on the theme “The challenges of the Internet: governance and ethical dimensions of the information society – towards an integrated agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean”, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the Dominican Ministry for Regional Integration Policies, the Dominican Telecommunications Institute (INDOTEL), the Dominica National Commission for UNESCO, the Permanent Delegation of the Dominican Republic to UNESCO and the Presidential Office for Information and Communication Technology (OPTIC), held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 26 and 27 November 2015,

Considering the agreements, decisions, declarations, recommendations and outcomes of:

- the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Phases I and II, held respectively in Geneva, Switzerland, from 10 to 12 December 2003 and Tunis, Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005;
- the first regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on info-ethics in cyberspace, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 6 to 9 December 2006;
- the first regional Information for All Programme (IFAP) meeting for English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean States on the theme “Building Caribbean Knowledge Societies”, held in Saint George’s, Grenada, from 15 to 17 June 2011;
- the Code of Ethics for the Information Society, adopted by the Intergovernmental Council of

the Information for All Programme (IFAP), taken note of by UNESCO's General Conference at its 36th session in 2011;

- the UNESCO International Conference "CONNECTing the Dots: Options for Future Action", held in order to finalize the comprehensive study on the Internet, entitled "Keystones to foster inclusive knowledge societies - Access to information and knowledge, freedom of expression, privacy and ethics on a global Internet", held in Paris, France, from 3 to 5 March 2015;
- the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City, Mexico, from 5 to 7 August 2015, and the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2018) approved at the Conference;
- the first UNESCO/Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Conference and Consultation on the Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society and Internet Privacy, held in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis, on 23 and 24 September 2015,

Affirming that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines a set of values and ethical principles that should underpin options, practices and decision-making, and that the rights that people have offline must be protected online, in accordance with United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 26/13 and, in particular, United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/167 on the right to privacy in the digital age,

Bearing in mind the consultation process being pursued in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly with private sector players, civil society, the technical community and governments, for the WSIS+10 review process that concluded on 15 and 16 December 2015 with a General Assembly High-Level Meeting,

Considering the need to continue the development of the information and knowledge society in the region, while paying special attention to small island developing States (SIDS),

Convinced of the usefulness of a mutual understanding to achieve respect for human rights, the full participation of all, world peace, sustainable progress and development of the potential of each individual and each society by reducing the digital divide,

1. *Recognize* that the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer new opportunities for improving access to and ownership of information and knowledge as necessary elements for sustainable human development, and that in order to achieve this, an environment conducive to the development of public policies for inclusive information and knowledge societies must be created, human capacities must be developed through education, and democratic societies must be established through participation, collaboration and innovation, as well as infrastructure;
2. *Recommend* that the stability of cyberspace and access to ICTs are indispensable for inclusion and sustainable development and require responsible use and collaborative action between the various users and stakeholders, as well as systems designed to ensure the protection of and respect for fundamental freedoms and rights, such as freedom of expression and privacy;
3. *Recognize* that ICT and innovation processes are not necessarily neutral and that without proper care of their use and applications they can give rise to social transformations that may further entrench and exacerbate existing inequalities, creating new forms of tension, disadvantage, inequity and exclusion;
4. *Consider* that in order for regional integration processes to become effective mechanisms for improving quality of life - reducing poverty to the minimum and building inclusive societies for the poor and large numbers of people who suffer from inequality, many of whom live in the region - programmes aimed at strengthening ICTs must have a key role as a tool for achieving equitable

economic, social and human progress in a context of sustainable development; regional integration can only succeed if the information and knowledge society can provide an opportunity to achieve the objectives of unity and integration of the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean;

5. *Pledge* to promote information and communication policies that enhance access, guided by governance principles that ensure openness, transparency, accountability, multilingualism, inclusiveness, gender equality and civil participation, including for youth, persons with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable groups;

6. *Also pledge* to use the Internet and ICT as tools to build open, inclusive and fair information and knowledge societies.

To these ends, we agreed on the following action:

- to support, through regional and/or national mechanisms (policies and regulatory frameworks) the Internet universality principles, as defined in the outcome document for the “CONNECTing the Dots: Options for Future Action” Conference, adopted by UNESCO, to promote a human rights-based, open Internet, accessible to all and characterized by multistakeholder participation;
- to promote regional and/or national regulatory harmonization for the Internet;
- to improve the processes and structures that foster regional integration efforts in the field of ICT and the Internet, including the exchange of experiences and best practices among stakeholders;
- to promote universal access to information and knowledge through incentives to increase access to public domain content, ensuring that every citizen may benefit from the development of ICT;
- to recommend that States promote mutual cooperation in the formulation of Internet access policies for island or landlocked countries;
- to contribute to the design and implementation of national information strategies and information and knowledge societies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified in the plan of action “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 70/1;
- to foster capacity development, including digital literacy, for the acquisition of new skills, abilities and aptitudes by all stakeholders;
- to support research to identify emerging trends and develop policies based on experiences.

We, the participants in this meeting, express our sincere gratitude to the Dominican Republic and UNESCO for preparing and holding this meeting. We also call on UNESCO, through its Information for All Programme (IFAP), to support the monitoring efforts aimed at strengthening international, regional and subregional cooperation, the exchange of experiences, research, capacity building, harmonization of strategies and development of public policies to consolidate the information and knowledge societies in the region.

Declaration adopted on 27 December 2015 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.