ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY:
INTERNET GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(Document for Comment)

Research:
Fuatai Purcell
Guyverson Vernous
Kutoma Wakunuma
Shahid Akbar
Susana Finquelievich

Supervision:
Veronica Cretu
Valentin Katrandjiev

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FOREWORD

There is no denying that such ICTs as the Internet have had and continue to have a major fundamental global impact on lives in both direct and/or indirect ways. These technologies have, to all intents and purposes, changed the way in which we communicate, do business, and live. The benefits of ICTs are enormous. Unfortunately, the benefits are not equally experienced by everyone, more so for those in developing countries. This has meant a continued persistence of the digital divide.

High level meetings, such as the United Nations WSIS forum held in two phases; the first in Geneva in 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005, have advocated helping developing countries to also benefit from the access and use of ICTs in the hope of overcoming the digital divide and in the process attain social and economic growth. In trying to help bring the benefits of ICTs to all, civil society has played and continues to play a key role.

Internet Governance discussions are taking place at the global level, it being one of the major unresolved issues of the last two summits. In this discussion process, civil society continues to play a strong role, especially in raising the voice of developing countries on public policy Internet Governance issues.

This paper has hence attempted to analyse the role that civil society has played within the context of developing countries and the issue of Internet Governance. To this end, the paper discusses not only the role of civil society but also its impact and the implications that its role has had. The paper also looks at the challenges that civil society has faced and will perhaps continue to face. It is within the spirit of contributing to this important debate about the Information Society that this paper also offers recommendations within the context of the research.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

1. INTRODUCTION 5

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT 7

3. METHODOLOGY 7

4. CHAPTERS 7

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS 12

7. RECOMMENDATIONS 25

8. CONCLUSIONS BY THE IGRP TEAM ON “THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL
   SOCIETY FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN INTERNET
   GOVERNANCE” 26

9. REFERENCES 27
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary provides an in-depth introduction to this research paper on Internet Governance and the role of civil society, which has been prepared for DiploFoundation. It contains information on the impact of the work of civil society in discussions surrounding the impact of Internet Governance on developing countries, and why it is important for developing countries to have a say in matters pertaining to governing the Internet.

Today, developments are rapidly underway to ensure that the Internet is governed in a much more transparent way, as a result of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process 2002-2005.

The research was conducted online by a team from DiploFoundation, who are students studying Internet Governance online. This team is from different parts of the world working together using Diplo’s learning and research portal, chat-rooms, and email. We believe that this is the first online research of its kind in terms of studying the impact of civil society’s voice on policies affecting the future of Internet Governance.

Team members were given topics to research, which was conducted online and required team members to read online papers, make annotations, and attach links.

The key question of this research is: “What is the role of civil society in Internet Governance and what impact has it had during the World Summit on the Information Society?”

The views expressed in this research are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of DiploFoundation.
1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have fundamentally changed the way in which we communicate, do business, and live. The benefits of ICTs are enormous. Unfortunately, it is only the developed countries and a few but increasing number of developing countries that have experienced these benefits. This has resulted in the aggravation of the existing socio-economic divide, resulting in the so-called digital divide. The subsequent question is: how do we ensure that every country and all the people of the world can benefit from modern technologies? One attempt to answer this question has been the implementation of two World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS), the first one in Geneva 2003 and the second one held in Tunis in 2005. These were the brain-child of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with the support of the United Nations (UN), whose driving force was the need, “to extend the benefits of new telecommunication technologies to the entire world’s inhabitants” (ITU, 2001). The ITU committed itself to the two summits, which were very inclusive to the point of involving all sectors, including governments from different countries of the world, the private sector, as well as civil society. Throughout the WSIS preparations for the first and second summits, civil society was given the opportunity to provide input into all the issues raised, including Internet Governance, which forms a substantial part of this research. As such, it is important and necessary to develop and understand the concepts of civil society’s participation in the quest for the construction of an Information Society both pre- and post-WSIS.

This research therefore looks at the role civil society has played, plays and will perhaps continue to play in such a construction. It has several thematic chapters and begins with a discussion of the WSIS background, this is followed by a chapter on civil society’s key role in the Information Society. There is also a discussion of civil society’s role as regards Internet Governance as well as its impact and challenges, among others. Noteworthy is the fact that it is the first time that civil society has been invited to play an important and influential role in a United Nations summit of such magnitude. This is not surprising when one looks back to the Rio Summit of 1992, where some 50,000 activists participated in the summit proceedings. Since then, civil society has become an integral part of global politics and as such it is interesting to see that such a tradition is taking root. In this vein, the research’s cardinal focus is on what impact civil society has on developing countries in as far as Internet Governance is concerned and how these countries have influenced and can continue to influence pre- and post-WSIS respectively, to take note of the important need for developing countries to fully participate in the governance of the Internet. For the purposes of this research, the civil society being referred to is the WSIS Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus, which works closely within the UN–WSIS agenda. It has to be noted that there are varied definitions of civil society, with no specific universally accepted description. However, civil society is the arena in which people come together to pursue the interests they hold in common – not for profit or the exercise of political power, but because they care enough about something to take collective action. For instance, civil society can make the strongest impact by protecting global public interests. Such an impact can already be noted from the Civil Society Declaration, which states in part that the society “aspire[s] to build information and communication societies where development is framed by fundamental human rights and oriented to achieving a more equitable distribution of resources, leading to the elimination of poverty in a way that is non-exploitative and environmentally
sustainable.” Civil society is also “committed to building societies in which everyone can freely create, access, utilise, share, and disseminate information and knowledge, so that individuals, communities and people are empowered to improve their quality of life and to achieve their full potential” (Civil Society Declaration, 2003). By turning this declaration into reality, civil society can foster functional and influential partnerships and in so doing protect global public interests. With this in mind, civil society may include representatives from “professional” and grassroots NGOs, the trade union movement, community media activists, mainstream and traditional media interest groups, volunteers, the disability movement, youth activists, indigenous peoples, philanthropic institutions, gender advocates, as well as human and communication rights advocates, to name but a few. It is for this reason that this research has attempted to investigate how much of an impact the civil society in question has had and how closely it has collaborated and worked within WSIS among other concerns, involving developing countries in Internet Governance as a way of improving its full participation in the Information Society to achieve the social and economic advantages that come with such a knowledge society.
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Having looked at the above, the research hopes to achieve the following objectives:

i. To analyse whether by fully participating in WSIS, civil society has had a positive impact in developing countries, for example, and whether it has somehow contributed “to building a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilise, and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life,” as is enshrined in the WSIS Declaration of Principles.

ii. To analyse civil society organisations’ involvement in national decision-making processes on Internet Governance and WSIS.

iii. To propose actions for civil society organisations on Internet Governance after WSIS.

The research hopes to achieve the following results:

Highlight best practices for greater inclusion and active role of civil society organisations as regards Internet Governance and WSIS.

3. METHODOLOGY

i. Online information gathering in terms of qualitative research;

ii. Analysis of existing online documents.

4. CHAPTERS

WSIS BACKGROUND – The genesis of WSIS, Its Different Key Actors, and Documents Ensuing from the WSIS Summit

The WSIS process began in 1998 when the ITU formally proposed the summit, which was subsequently authorised by the UN General Assembly in 2000, to be held in two phases (the first phase in December 2003 and the second one in November 2005). Three preparatory meetings were to follow before each phase. The work carried out during the preparatory meetings included the articulation of the problems, opportunities, solutions, and actions relating to the Information Society.

The second phase (2005) welcomed 23,000 participants to the Tunisian capital Tunis. Civil society marked its presence with 6500 participants and 29 thematic meetings, which took place across 29 various country stands. Two documents ensued from the Tunis WSIS, the threefold Tunis Agenda, whose focus included: financing, Internet Governance and follow-up; and the Tunis Commitment, which reiterated the Geneva commitment. The impact of CS was seen in the text adopted with respect to, among other issues, human rights, freedom of speech, open source development, and sharing of knowledge. Civil society took advantage of its position during the whole event and
as an exemplar of how ICTs can be effective tools of communication used the Internet to its full advantage to communicate and make documents available to all, who of course included delegates from governments, the private sector, as well as observers. It is worth noting that this is the first time in UN history that the organisation has planned to hold two similar summits in succession of each other that have had significant linkage to all aspects of our lives and in particular, the role civil society is expected to play. WSIS is a particular global multistakeholder forum where state leaders, the private sector, and NGOs assembled together to discuss issues regarding the Information Society. A Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action was developed during the preparatory meetings and adopted by the heads of state during the summit.

Therefore, what was the level of CS participation in WSIS?
Due to the fact that this paper is based on the analyses of the online sources and other relevant sources, the preceding section was informed by about 18 links pointing to various sites and documents. These links have been incorporated in the reference section and can also be accessed through the Internet Governance Research Portal at http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=85, in the WSIS Background folder.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY – This next chapter is an exploration of the key role of CS in WSIS through its different thematic caucuses and working groups.

CS has attempted to extend the Information Society debate by providing networking channels to disseminate relevant information on the content of WSIS and the negotiation process to all members of the community. Civil society was recognised by WSIS as providing a crucial role in the first preparatory meeting (PrepCom1). During PrepCom2 of the first phase of WSIS (17-28 February 2003), the Civil Society Bureau (CSB) was created after intense consultations organised by the civil society division, with numerous civil society representatives. The international Civil Society Bureau represents a “turning point” in the history of the United Nations (UN) and international negotiations, insofar as, for the first time, civil society has mechanisms that facilitate dialogue with governments, which insures its effective participation at the heart of the decisive structure of a UN summit. The Civil Society Bureau is composed of various “families,” which represent the different constituencies within civil society and provide networking channels for disseminating relevant information on the negotiation process to all members of the community. The bureau also represents regional groups from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, CIS and North America, the Middle East, as well as Western Asia. As with the governmental bureau, CSB’s functions are essentially of an organisational nature, aiming to maximise civil society participation at the summit (UNGLS, 2003).

The role of the CSB, therefore, is to serve as a home for civil society, acting as an interlinkage between civil society participants and the intergovernmental bureau and processing operational and logistical needs, procedures, and interactions. The CSB enhances interaction between all sections of civil society and between civil society and others. The bureau reports regularly to the civil society plenary on decisions taken about who in turn will select speakers to voice their concerns during the PrepCom plenary meetings. Since then, civil society continues to play a significant role in the
WSIS process in terms of active participation and addressing the core development issues in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. In addition, civil society has been advocating discussion of issues regarding intellectual property, human rights and freedom of expression, as well as free and open source software, among others. For example, the Civil Society Declaration notes that, “Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Because of this, civil society has determined that “there must be no prior censorship, arbitrary control of, or constraints on, participants in the communication process or on the content, transmission, and dissemination of information. Pluralism of the sources of information and the media must be safeguarded and promoted.”

As a stakeholder in WSIS, civil society has a major role to play at both the international and the national level, particularly for the less privileged in developing countries. Hence, the significance of its role in terms of working hand in hand with the UN and participating fully in the WSIS process. Furthermore, a lot of lessons have been learnt from the participation of CS during the preparatory meetings for the first and second phase of WSIS. During the first summit, civil society recognised the importance of ICTs in facilitating collaboration between its members and especially in drafting the Civil Society Declaration. The role of ICTs in this process of civil society networking, especially in physical meetings, was significant and indeed it would have been impossible to achieve what civil society has achieved without access to ICTs.

It was also recognised during the first phase of WSIS that the huge global imbalances in the access and use of ICTs were also reflected in the organisational processes of civil society and one speaker stated that, “we regret that so many in civil society, especially from poorer communities, were excluded from the process; and that the resources were unavailable to engage in more direct interaction” (Seán Ó Siochrú, 2003). It is worth noting that many issues submitted by civil society as key concerns to developing nations were omitted from the working documents for the Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan. During the third PrepCom (2003), the dissatisfaction amplified, when a civil society press release avowed that if the final Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan did not reflect social priorities, civil society would neither lend credibility to the summit nor to its results. From this statement followed a day of debate within WSIS in Geneva to ensure that civil society voices were heard, including other groups mostly from outside the process. As many civil society members believed that the summit documents did not reflect the fundamental inequalities that govern the global Information Society, they decided to come up with their own Declaration of Principles outside of the official documents. In 2004, civil society groups adjusted their critiques and suggestions for dealing with the crucial issues relating to Internet Governance and the financing of ICT development and at the 3rd PrepCom (2005) despite different meetings and roundtables focussed on the second phase of the summit. Without surprise, civil society groups were prevented from participating in what were deemed to be crucial sessions. Due to such developments, the battle to influence the agenda of governments and the definitive Action Plan for the Information Society within the 2005 WSIS still prevailed. Nevertheless, during the preparations for this phase of the summit, some governments had worked closely with civil society in drafting their national ICT strategies. But the question then is: can governments continue to work with civil society after WSIS?
Although some critiques have pointed out that the WSIS Plan paints a rather utopian picture of an Information Society where “everything is right” for “everyone;” civil society can still continue to be an advocate for underprivileged people in making the WSIS itself as well as governments and industries realise that not everything is right for everyone due to a number of reasons. For instance, civil society’s role would be to continue pointing out and advocating the fact that not everything is right for everyone, because there are issues of financial and human resources at stake in achieving an Information Society. Without this advocacy the results might see a hindrance of freedom of information due to cost and a possible infringement of communication rights. Although there can never be a utopian Information Society, civil society continues to believe that it is still right to advocate for a better Information Society.

During the first phase of the WSIS held in Geneva, 10-12 December 2003, a mandate was given to the Secretary General of the UN to establish a group to continue work on the issue of Internet Governance. To respond to this mandate, the Secretary General set up the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) with 40 members, including some from civil society. There is no doubt that the Internet has had a major influence at not only a global level but at a regional and local level as well. In more aspects than one, the Internet’s influence has resulted in a cultural, economic, and social transformation in both a direct and indirect way. The heads of states and governments, during the Geneva phase of the WSIS, noted that the Internet is a central element of the infrastructure of the emerging Information Society and established principles to guide the management of the Internet, including a definition of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. They recognized that there are differing views on the suitability of current institutions and mechanisms for managing processes and developing policies for the global Internet. This has meant that there has been close attention paid to its governance. In this regard, the questions that come to the fore are: what form of Internet Governance is needed, who are and should be the main actors, and lastly what is the role of civil society within this context, at the international and national level? In recent years, the debate on Internet Governance has focussed on two key aspects. One is technical coordination and the other is public policy making. These two aspects have not been seen to be transparent and this has raised questions as to whether Internet Governance should be centralised or decentralised.

The distinction between technical coordination and public policy making has been unclear. This has created an opportunity for broad reflection on the kind of decision-making processes there should be in cyberspace. Other questions that have arisen as a result of this debate include the role of developing countries in the public policy making process. Part of the argument has been that because there are more people in developing countries, these countries should have a voice in the policy-making aspects. Some countries are concerned that if they do not follow the mandated procedures developed by a monopoly, their domain name may be denied. This concern moves the debate to who should have a voice in creating policies the Internet community will be made to follow and in determining questions that have increasingly significant political and financial implications. These and other questions that have so far been raised focus attention on what influence and impact civil society has as far as these are concerned. In recent years, the increasingly visible role of civil society, in shaping the agendas and programmes of public and private organisations, nationally and internationally, has highlighted the fact that there is a governance
dimension to every area of economic and social life. Seen in this light, governance is a part of many different processes related to the Internet, including the development of technical standards and the management of core resources, as well as the regulation of the misuse and abuse of the Internet.

In fact, through its different thematic caucuses and working groups, civil society groups participating in summit processes, instigated a “wind of debates” around the WSIS themes by setting up administrative and lobbying mechanisms, organising different conferences and side-events at the summit itself, and submitting input statements. Responding to its continuing exclusion, shortly before the Geneva summit, civil society withdrew from the lobbying process and outlined an alternative summit declaration “Shaping Information Society for Human Needs.” The latter criticised the privatisation and monopolisation of knowledge and emphasised the global commons, community media, free software, human rights, privacy, and participatory communication.

All the above mentioned facts, details, etc. have been analysed and presented in the five boxes (Internet Governance, CS input to WGIG, Reports on CS work, Declaration, the Actors) of the civil society folder, which can be accessed at: http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=85.

The IGRP Portal – The Role of Civil Society from Developing Countries in Internet Governance, also contains extremely useful links to the sites tackling the issues of evidence of civil society’s work – with a focus on civil society as a WSIS multistakeholder; Civil Society and Internet Governance – addresses the bottom of the pyramid.

A special place in this research has been given to CIVIL SOCIETY AND KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY.

Civil society can play a significant role as a proactive agent in the different sectors and levels of the new economy to help developing countries achieve e-readiness.

Many developed countries, and a few emerging countries, such as Brazil, India, China, and South Africa, have adopted national strategies aimed at increasing the innovative capacity of their industries. As Gurstein (2003, p. 3) states, “Among the common elements of these strategies is a focus on scientific research and development, the training of highly qualified personnel, the creation of an environment of incentives to support the creation and growth of knowledge/research intensive enterprises, the re-orientation of the educational systems towards science and mathematics, and the creation of an element of the national culture, which is supportive of these areas and so on.” He insists on the principle that it is possible that the real opportunity for innovation and for having major impacts as a result of an innovation strategy is in enabling development to leap-frog directly to a knowledge-based economy from a more traditional economic base. What might be the relationship between civil society and the new economy, understood as part of the development process both in the developed and the developing countries? Is civil society ready to be a proactive agent in this process? Which specific lines of action should civil society undertake in order for integration to the new economy to become a motor for development, as well as to diminish its negative impacts on fragile
economies, and on vulnerable social groups? This will depend in large part on citizens’ e-readiness. **Citizen e-readiness describes the readiness of a nation’s citizens to make purposeful use of Internet technologies** (IAP, 2000); it covers many facets of such use, but particularly equality in access opportunities, training, knowledge, and the social appropriation of ICTs. In the specific case of the new economy (NE) environment, citizen e-readiness also defines the ability of individuals, communities, and civil society to participate as proactive agents in the different sectors and levels of the new economy.

As the Information Society has become synonymous with the Knowledge Economy it is imperative that in working with governments, civil society:

- raises awareness with regards to the importance of the Knowledge Economy in terms of development, and to spread this knowledge among citizens and other civil society organisations;
- understands that the Knowledge Economy implies new opportunities for citizens and above all, for sustainable development;
- participates in the creation of national, macro-regional, and global policies and in the building of technological capacities in developing countries;
- intervenes for purposes of reducing possible negative impacts that may lead to the increase of the digital divide for fragile economies and vulnerable social groups as a result of constant dynamic ICT innovations in the Knowledge Economy. This might be achieved through community initiatives, using shared technologies or civil society participation in local economic planning;
- works in favour of increasing e-readiness among citizens;
- develops a new vision that looks beyond the issues of connectivity, access, and open source or “free” software, and instead also focusses on having at least partial control over Internet infrastructures.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

During the last few years, Internet Governance (IG) has experienced some major developments in terms of inclusion of social-ethical-developmental aspects rather than focussing only on the technical perspectives. Now, the IG approach has become much broader than the narrow aspects of its earlier regime, mainly addressing issues like DNS, IP, ICANN, IETF, etc. After the Tunis Summit, IG entered another dimension.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis resulted in the decision to establish an Internet Governance Forum. Almost all of the Internet governance issues raised by the summit remain open and unresolved: US unilateral control of the root, political oversight of ICANN, the role of governments in setting public policy for the Internet, etc. The main accomplishment of the summit was the creation of a multistakeholder forum, which will continue these discussions.

The critical part of the forum issue now is who should do what and who should be involved. These questions also raise issues like how should the forum be organised and implemented. The Tunis Summit has set in motion long-term processes that will broadly change the role of national governments in Internet policy, and ICANN
specifically. The UN has begun setting up a body that will debate the Internet's most pressing problems. A meeting to decide the structure of the group and what it should debate first will be held in February.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is expected to be widely influential on international and also national IG policies.

Here are the main characteristics of the forum:

- Responsibility for facilitating coordination (and discussion) of Internet-related public policy issues;
- Participation, on an equal footing, by governments, the private sector, and civil society.

As an integral part of WSIS, “Civil society is pleased with the decision to create an Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which it has advocated for since 2003. We also are pleased that the IGF will have sufficient scope to deal with the issues we believe must be addressed, most notably the conformity of existing arrangements with the Geneva Principles, and other cross-cutting or multidimensional issues that cannot be optimally dealt with within current arrangements. However, we reiterate our concerns that the forum must not be anchored in any existing specialised international organisation, meaning that its legal form, finances, and professional staff should be independent. In addition, we reiterate our view that the forum should be more than a place for dialogue. As was recommended by the WIG Report, it should also provide expert analysis, trend monitoring, and capacity building, including in close collaboration with external partners in the research community.

We are concerned about the absence of details on how this forum will be created and on how it will be funded. We insist that the modalities of the IGF be determined in full cooperation with civil society. We emphasise that success in the forum, as in most areas of Internet Governance, will be impossible without the full participation of civil society. By full participation we mean much more than playing a mere advisory role. Civil society must be able to participate fully and equally both in plenary and any working or drafting group discussions, and must have the same opportunities as other stakeholders to influence agendas and outcomes.

The Tunis Agenda addressed the issue of political oversight of critical Internet resources in its paragraphs 69 to 71. This, in itself, is an achievement. It is also important that governments recognised the need for the development of a set of Internet-related public policy principles that would frame political oversight of Internet resources. These principles must respect, protect and promote human rights as laid down in international human rights treaties, ensure equitable access to information and online opportunities for all, and promote development.

It is important that governments have established that developing these principles should be a shared responsibility. However, it is very unfortunate that the Tunis Agenda suggests that governments are only willing to share this role and responsibility among themselves, in cooperation with international organisations.
Civil society remains strongly of the view that the formulation of appropriate and legitimate public policies pertaining to Internet Governance requires the full and meaningful involvement of non-governmental stakeholders.

With regard to paragraph 40 of the Tunis Agenda, we are disappointed that there is no mention that efforts to combat cyber-crime need to be exercised in the context of checks and balances provided by fundamental human rights, particularly freedom of expression and privacy.

With regard to paragraph 63, we believe that a country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) is a public good both for people of the concerned country or economy and for global citizens who have various linkages to particular countries. While we recognise the important role of governments in protecting the ccTLDs that refer to their countries or economies, this role must be executed in a manner that respects human rights as expressed in existing international treaties through a democratic, transparent, and inclusive process with full involvement of all stakeholders.

To ensure that development of the Internet and its governance takes place in the public interest, it is important for all stakeholders to better understand how core Internet Governance functions – as for example, DNS management, IP address allocation, and others – are carried out. It is equally important that these same actors understand the linkages between broader Internet Governance and Internet related matters, such as cyber-crime, Intellectual Property Rights, e-commerce, e-government, human rights and capacity building, and economic development. The responsibility of creating such awareness should be shared by everyone, including those at present involved in the governance and development of the Internet and emerging information and communication platforms. Equally, it is essential that as this awareness develops in newer users of the Internet, older users must be open to the new perspectives that will emerge.”

The WGIG Report categorically identified that, “Recognising the essential role of all stakeholders in Internet Governance, this section expands on the roles and responsibilities of the principal stakeholders, i.e., governments, the private sector, and civil society, as well as intergovernmental and international organisations, as outlined in the WSIS Declaration of Principles.” The academic and technical communities also play an important role.

The ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES of civil society include:
- Awareness-raising and capacity-building (knowledge, training, skills sharing);
- Promoting various public interest objectives;
- Facilitating network-building;
- Mobilising citizens in democratic processes;
- Bringing perspectives of marginalised groups, including, for example, excluded communities and grass-roots activists;

1 “Much more could have been achieved,” Civil Society Statement on the World Summit on the Information Society, 18 December 2005.
• Engaging in policy processes;
• Contributing expertise, skills, experience and knowledge on a range of ICT policy areas;
• Contributing to policy processes and policies that are more bottom-up, people-centred and inclusive;
• Research and development of technologies and standards;
• Development and dissemination of best practices;
• Helping to ensure that political and market forces are accountable to the needs of all members of society;
• Encouraging social responsibility and good governance practices;
• Advocating for the development of social projects and activities that are critical but may not be “fashionable” or profitable;
• Contributing to shaping visions of human-centred information societies based on human rights, sustainable development, social justice, and empowerment.

Furthermore, the WGIG recognised that the contribution to the Internet of the academic community is very valuable and constitutes one of its main sources of inspiration, innovation, and creativity. Similarly, the technical community and its organisations are deeply involved in Internet operation, Internet standard setting, and Internet services development. Both of these groups make a permanent and valuable contribution to the stability, security, functioning, and evolution of the Internet. They interact extensively with and within all stakeholder groups.

The WGIG also reviewed the respective roles and responsibilities of existing intergovernmental and international organisations and other forums and the various mechanisms for both formal and informal consultations among these institutions. It noted that there is scope to improve coordination to some extent.”

From the process of WSIS, the IG issues, especially from the perspective of developing countries, that raised the most apprehension were the following:

1. Role of CS in IGF is still not very clear;
2. Awareness and understanding of IG issues are very low among the CS components in developing countries;
3. Voice of developing countries is not being represented appropriately in the IG process due to low capacity (of understanding IG issues) of majority participants;
4. Emphasising policy and technical issues of IG rather than addressing the priority areas like public policy issues;
5. Multistakeholder approach is not working properly in developing countries to get the maximum benefits from the WSIS process;
6. Coordination between the CS components is also not very effective.

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2 Report from the Working Group on Internet Governance, Document WSIS-II/PC-3/DOC/5-E.
It is expected that the new Forum can be used to develop the public policy principles needed to guide global Internet Governance in the future. Noting their prior calls for a framework convention on Internet Governance, and related calls for an “Internet bill of rights” or “first amendment” for the Internet, they expressed the hope that these discussions will not be confined to governments. They also reiterated their call for more reliance on online methods of deliberation and participation, to broaden inclusion. “We must start using the Internet to improve governance of the Internet,” said Syracuse University's Derrick Cogburn.

The role of civil society at this point of IGF formation is crucial, specially to ensure the voice of developing countries on IG issues, and that the CS communities and development partners work together to address the priority issues of IG.

Civil society should consider the following perspectives\(^3\) while involved in the Forum process:

- How can the structure of the forum appropriately involve various stakeholders covering a wide range of issues?
- How can the forum promote a bottom-up and inclusive nature, while maintaining an efficient and operational organisation?
- How can various stakeholders be involved, making the forum representative of the global Internet community?
- How can complementarity between all stakeholders be increased?
- What solutions from other international organisations/initiatives could be adapted for the forum?
- How should the forum and any supporting bodies be structured and organised?
- How can meaningful participation of institutions and individuals from developing countries in the forum be facilitated?

The new forum discussion creates an opportunity for the CS members to contribute more significantly in developing countries. To align the civil societies of developing countries in the present IGF process, an integrated approach is required to bring the benefits of the forum to the broader Internet communities in developing countries, and CS can play the role of medium in this journey.

6. IMPLICATIONS – This part of the research will try to discuss the impact, effect, and implications of civil society (CS) on Internet Governance vis à vis developing countries.

To help assess the impact, effect, and implications, this chapter will further discuss and analyse, among others, the CS statement on the World Summit on the Information Society, entitled “Much more could have been achieved,”\(^4\) which was already introduced in the preceding chapter. “This is an overview and a self-assessment of CS

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3 Based on the agenda set by Diplo Foundation for the International Conference - Internet Governance: The Way Forward, MALTA, February 10-12, 2006

on WSIS as well as its observation of WSIS proceedings. Before that though, below is part of a number of CS aspirations for an Information Society, cited from the CS’s 2003 Declaration of Principles titled, “Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs.” This extract gives an idea of the CS outlook for an Information Society.

We are committed to building information and communication societies that are people-centred, inclusive, and equitable. Societies in which everyone can freely create, access, utilise, share, and disseminate information and knowledge, so that individuals, communities, and peoples are empowered to improve their quality of life and to achieve their full potential. Societies founded on the principles of social, political, and economic justice, and peoples' full participation and empowerment, and thus societies that truly address the key development challenges facing the world today. Societies that pursue the objectives of sustainable development, democracy, and gender equality, for the attainment of a more peaceful, just, egalitarian, and thus sustainable world, premised on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Civil Society Declaration: “Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs”)

http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/civil-society-declaration.pdf

Civil society encompasses several different stakeholders, brought together because of similar interests. For the purposes of this chapter, the one similar interest that is being concentrated on is that of the creation of an Information Society, as pointed out in the CS Declaration. The need for such a society saw the creation of several civil society caucuses, such as the Internet Governance caucus, the human rights caucus, the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group, as well as the Patents, Copyright, and Trademarks Working Group to name but a few. These and other caucuses as indicated above were formed in the lead-up up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) phases I and II to articulate information age issues. The need for such articulation came about due to Resolution 73 at an ITU Plenipotentiary Conference held in 1998 in Minneapolis, which resolved to hold a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and include it on the United Nations’ agenda. The reason for this was because it was felt that information and communication technologies were playing a significant part in the world today and fundamentally changing people’s lives in one way or another. For example, the WSIS website reads in part: “The digital revolution, fired by the engines of information and communication technologies, has fundamentally changed the way people think, behave, communicate, work, and earn their livelihood. It has forged new ways to create knowledge, educate people, and disseminate information.” Because the Information Society is assumed to involve everyone, it is imperative that CS have a role in WSIS, both before and after, if the aspirations of an Information Society are to be achieved. CS’s role has mainly been that of advocacy in several areas that relate to the Information Society. It was under resolution 56/183 of the UN’s General Assembly of 2002 that CS and other groups were encouraged to participate and effectively contribute to “relevant United Nations bodies, in particular the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in preparing for WSIS.”

5 http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/why.html
6 http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/why.html
Civil Society’s Role – Since then, CS has been an active contributor and in its Declaration of 2003, CS outlines its core principles and challenges in regards to the Information Society, some of which include:

- Access to Information and Means of Communication
- Access to Health Information
- Development of Sustainable and Community-based ICT Solutions
- Culture, Knowledge, and the Public Domain
- Infrastructure and Access
- Information Generation and Knowledge Development
- Global Governance of ICT and Communications

Impact, Implications, Effects, and Challenges of CS

As a reflection of WSIS activities and its own, CS in its statement on the World Summit on the Information Society outlines several areas and issues that it perceives as playing an important role in the establishment of an Information Society. It points out areas where improvements need to be made as well as where successes have been achieved. What this section does is also offer an analysis of these perceptions as a way of examining the impact and effect, as well as the implications for CS, in respect to IG among others.

Social Justice, Financing, and People-Centred Development

The statement indicates that CS was not overly accepting of most of the WSIS outcomes. In part, the statement reads that the Tunis Phase “did not provide concrete achievements to meaningfully address development priorities.”

CS was of the opinion that WSIS should have done more than merely discuss new financing mechanisms for ICT for development and should instead treat such mechanisms as a priority and not as competition with other areas of development.

This argument though seems to ignore the fact that not all countries might see ICTs as a priority but rather perhaps a sector that could be combined and integrated with other developmental areas as a way of achieving sustainable development. For instance, the fact that not all countries have an ICT policy in Africa, although others are developing them, shows that ICTs are not always seen as an important part for sustainable development. For example, countries like South Africa, Namibia, and Tanzania have already developed ICT policies, others like Zambia, Angola, and Kenya are in the process of doing so, while countries like Libya and Somalia have no ICT policies formulated at all (ECA, 2005).

However, having, or being in the process of creating, an ICT policy does not necessarily suggest that a country is more committed to include ICTs on the national development agenda than those that do not, although it is seemingly encouraged. For example, look at developed countries, such as Canada, which plays a major role in supporting the establishment of ICT initiatives in developing countries but does not

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have a national ICT policy of its own. CS’s introduction of paragraph 35 in the Tunis Commitment and 21 in the Tunis Agenda, however, asserts the priority that CS accords to ICTs in national development. CS’s paragraphs 35 and 21 concentrate on the importance of finance and the important role this plays in public policy vis-à-vis the provision of ICT access and services, particularly for rural areas. These reaffirm the society’s stand on its perception of treating ICTs for development as a priority sector of development. For instance, paragraph 35 reads as follows:

“We recognise the central role of public policy in setting the framework in which resource mobilisation can take place”

(http://www.itu.int/itu-t/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/7.html), while paragraph 21 states that:

“We recognise that public finance plays a crucial role in providing ICT access and services to rural areas and disadvantaged populations including those in Small Island Developing States and Landlocked Developing Countries”

(http://www.ngocongo.org/ngomeet/WSIS/TunisAgenda.htm).

The Tunis Commitment is a reiteration and support of the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action for continued work begun during WSIS while the Tunis Agenda was scheduled to put the Plan of Action into motion.

Furthermore, the CS summit statement asserts its approval of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) launched in March 2005. Civil society, however, is not convinced of the commitments from governments and the private sector in ensuring that this fund works for the purposes it was intended, particularly because the launch was voluntary. CS has therefore impressed upon these entities to commit themselves so that the objectives are met. CS has proposed that such a commitment can work by adhering to the “Geneva Principle,” where each ICT contract concluded by a public administration with a private company includes a one percent contribution to the DSF.

It must be noted that although some private sector organisations and some governments have agreed about the fund, the agreement from countries like the United States was not without opposition. This is because the United States did not see the need for the creation of such an initiative as they already had a similar programme, known as the Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) in place, whose aim is to encourage open markets in emerging economies for US private investors to go into these societies and offer ICT skills and knowledge to small businesses so that they too may compete in the global market.

Although the DSF seems a favourable ideal, it might prove difficult to carry through especially in liberalised economies where most companies are privately owned, as the DFI seems to indicate. The CS argument on the other hand seems to overlook the neo-liberal policies path that most policy makers of various countries involved in WSIS seem to evidently follow. In such situations, policy makers are reluctant to be seen as dictating the investment climate. Policy makers, it would seem, would be inclined to instead promote policies that are favourable to the investor as a way of building the investors’ confidence (Granados and Knoke, 2005), and as such would be reluctant to enforce an initiative like the DSF. The creation of a liberalised investment

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9 http://www.iris.sgdg.org/actions/smsi/hr-wsis/list/2005/msg00268.html
10 http://www.dfi.gov/
environment often leaves end-users of ICTs for instance, having to pay higher costs in order to access ICTs. Arguably, this is what CS is trying to avoid, but unfortunately via an initiative that would be difficult to enforce. On the other hand, liberalised environments do allow competition to flourish, which in turn might see ICT accessibility prices fall. However, as is the case in most developing countries, ICT accessibility is still beyond the reach of most people. This has partly been blamed on the lack of a complete overhaul of telecommunication policies.

DSF resonates with similar, though somewhat different, initiatives, such as the universal access fund in such countries as South Africa (Parkinson, 2005) or indeed the rural development fund, as might be referred to in Zambia. The Zambian government, for instance, launched its rural development fund in 1996 where the government collects 5% of gross revenues of existing telecommunication companies in the country. This revenue is supposed to assist in developing remote areas by being used as an “enticer” for telecommunication companies to invest in rural areas. It is hoped that these companies and those that follow will be able to bid for a subsidy from government and then invest in rural areas using the fund. However, this has been a very contentious initiative and most service providers, although they support the idea of developing rural areas, do not often find favour with the initiative, especially because such an initiative has no parliamentary mandate and hence is not lawful. Several problems arise with these kinds of initiatives where investors might feel they are being forced to contribute against their will:

- lack of investor confidence in the regulator, although this is one problem governments would be keen to avoid;
- the fear of smaller telecommunication companies not being able to compete favourably if and when the fund starts operating and starts to attract bids because bigger companies will have more money and hence better technologies to win subsidies from governments;
- suspicion that the regulator might be mismanaging the funds collected even though the opposite might be true.

Such problems can only work against the very people such an initiative is supposed to assist. This is because of the influence of several factors: when investors seem unhappy with certain regulations, governments, for fear of losing investors, might be forced to put in place policies that might be popular with the investor but not with the populace. Also, investors might increase rates on ICT access, which also ends up affecting the general populace more.

As Granados and Knoke (2005) sum up: “consequently, government decisions mirror and reinforce existing social and political inequality” (2005, 290). This, in essence, means that consequently it is the underprivileged that continue to experience the digital divide. As such, the risk is that costs for accessing and using ICTs will continue to spiral and will be unaffordable for most people particularly those in poor, remote places. In addition, as is often the case with business enterprises, the maximisation of profits comes above everything else. It is highly improbable that initiatives like DSF or the rural investment fund or any other initiative planned to operate in a manner outlined above, will be a factor that will be taken into serious consideration.
**Human Rights**

CS states that the Information Society must be based on human rights as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The CS summit statement has thus far raised concern in relation to the negation of human rights during certain instances of both phases I and II of WSIS, but particularly during Phase II. The statement points out that, “In Tunis, the initiative by parts of civil society to organise a ‘Citizens’ Summit on the Information Society’ was prevented from happening,” while “at the Geneva Summit, the ‘We Seize’ event was closed down, but subsequently reopened.”

Such infringement of freedom of expression at summits, where freedoms of expression and assembly have been the uppermost objectives of an Information Society were obviously reprehensible and largely condemned, particularly when CS has been advocating for such freedoms to be part of what the Information Society should be. These infringements obviously negated point 4 of the WSIS Declaration of Principles, which reads as follows:

“We reaffirm, as an essential foundation of the Information Society, and as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organisation. It is central to the Information Society. Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers” ([http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html)).

The negation of the right of freedom of expression in an “information society” is very evident as pointed out in the CS summit statement and shows the extent or impact that CS can and cannot have. It can mobilise itself and advocate but it can only go as far as it is allowed to.

This is because of its very nature, CS has no underlying powers or mandate to enforce its agenda, more so when there is no will from policy makers. In this regard, there is a danger that CS’s work could suffer as far as making an impact is concerned, particularly in developing countries, where some countries are viewed as being under dictatorial leaderships. This can subsequently have an impact in IG in the event that its administration was to be decentralised and consequently managed by different countries or regions with different political systems. This argument in no way suggests that decentralisation might not work, but is merely looking at possible would-be scenarios. For instance, the stabbing of a French reporter, Christophe Boltanski of the French daily *Liberation*, who was in Tunis investigating human rights abuses raised an outcry because the stabbing was deemed suspicious, particularly when police showed no apparent interest or concern in his case. It is also understood

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that such human rights abuses extend to the use of the Internet in, ironically, a country that hosted WSIS II.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Internet Governance}

A consensus in which CS has played a major part\textsuperscript{13} was finally reached as to the way forward for Internet Governance, though there was no major change in who administers the Internet – at the moment. In its summit statement, CS offered its consent and support to the creation of an Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which it indicates it has advocated since 2003 and whose constituent meeting will be held in Athens, Greece sometime later this year.\textsuperscript{14} This consensus would seem like a major victory but on close inspection, the initial concerns aired on the perceived shortcomings of Internet Governance, such as it being administered solely by a US agency, have not necessarily been worked out. This is perhaps why the United States party at WSIS, although initially opposed to any radical changes in Internet administration due to, among other reasons, the historical origins of the Internet being in the US, agreed to sign the IGF document. Overall, it would seem that the IGF creation is a victory for both the US and those opposed to its management of the Internet. The victory can be perceived to favour all concerned parties because:

1. The document does not state that the US give up its role as regards Internet administration. For instance, point 77 of the document states that: “The IGF would have no oversight function and would not replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions, or organisations, but would involve them and take advantage of their expertise. It would be constituted as a neutral, non-duplicative, and non-binding process. It would have no involvement in day-to-day or technical operations of the Internet” (http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc3/working/dt15rev5.pdf).

This point therefore indicates that the agreement has not created or transferred Internet Governance, or its administration as it were, to an international body under perhaps the ITU or a UN-created body as was advocated in some quarters.

2. The IGF looks set to be mostly a discussion forum, where issues can be articulated regarding the way forward for Internet Governance. This is captured in point 80 of the IGF document which reads as follows:

We encourage the development of multistakeholder processes at the national, regional, and international levels to discuss and collaborate on the expansion and diffusion of the Internet as a means to support development efforts to achieve internationally-agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. (http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc3/working/dt15rev5.pdf).


\textsuperscript{13}The idea of an Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was introduced in the WGIG debates by civil society and was included in its final report: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/3730.html

\textsuperscript{14}http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc3/working/dt15rev5.pdf
This is the victory that stakeholders like CS can claim. Continued interaction between different parties is a promise that seems to work well for the moment. Therefore, in this respect, CS support for the IGF seems to be well founded in as far as its role in Internet Governance is concerned, because the IGF will continue to involve governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and CS itself. This is despite, as is stated in point 77, the fact that there will be no immediate changes in the way the Internet is governed. This therefore means that no other body or organisation other than ICANN, operating within a US Department of Commerce Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) mandate, with the help of a Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), retains to a large extent overall responsibility for Internet Governance. It must be noted too that GAC’s role, although comprising more than “100 national governments and international entities” is only that of advisor, “it represents the platform by which governments provide advice and guidance to ICANN regarding the public policy issues associated with the Internet naming and addressing system.” Therefore, in principle what this implies is that ICANN can choose to heed or ignore any advice GAC might provide.

Global Governance

On global governance, the CS summit statement partly reads as follows: “We are concerned that during the WSIS it emerged that some governments, especially from developed countries, lack faith in, and appear to be unwilling to invest authority and resources in the present multilateral system, along with concerted efforts to further improve it.” This looks like a simplistic view, although arguably there could be some possible truth in it. Although there might be a lack of commitment as perceived by CS, developing countries might be seemingly reluctant to invest authority and resources, perhaps due to the fact that they are not on the leading edge as far as technological innovations are concerned, which are dynamic and constantly changing.

Additionally, they are non-innovators due to various reasons, which include among others, lack of know-how, lack of human resources, as well as lack of resources for capacity building and infrastructure. Therefore, the fact that they are unable to compete equally at the global level with those countries that are making full use of the potentials and advantages of the information age perhaps makes it somewhat difficult to invest their authority and perhaps their resources. In addition, some developing countries might suffer from lack of confidence in partaking or indeed in showing willingness, as it were, in the multilateral system of the movement for an Information Society. Furthermore, whether ICTs are a vehicle for sustainable development is still a matter for debate.

Some developing countries might have a different view and as such see no need to invest authority and resources as far as an Information Society is concerned. As such, this has contributed to some countries not embracing the full potential of the information age. Also, as poverty levels are quite high in some developing countries, it might not always be a straightforward choice between investing in ICTs and looking

15 http://www.icann.org/general/icann-mou-25nov98.htm
16 http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc3/contributions/co92.pdf
at the immediate problems of poverty, even though ICTs are seen as tools that can be applied in the process of poverty reduction.

Furthermore, it can be assumed that the fact that there was a presence of some leaders from developing countries in Africa for instance during WSIS II, which included leaders like President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, President Alhadji Dr Yahya A.J.J Jammaeh of Gambia, joining in the discussions and debate about the way forward in achieving an Information Society for all, is somewhat of a testament to some commitment from developing countries. However, whether what they said can be carried through can only be measured in the long-term as the WSIS Plan of Action is set in motion.

CONCLUSION: It is evident that CS has played a significant role in IG and advocating for developing countries as far as the Information Society is concerned. The fact that CS managed to bring together different stakeholders and participate actively and fully in various plenary sessions as well as in PrepComs leading up to WSIS I and II shows the massive influence, effect, and impact CS has had and continues to have. Such an impact would be difficult to ignore by policy makers. For instance, there were presentations from both developed and developing countries, which included developing countries showcasing some of their various ICT initiatives and projects. This was a learning platform for both developed and developing countries; knowledge could be exchanged, improved upon, as well as created. The CS’s lobbying for the IGF also shows its impact and influence in shaping the future of IG.

However, with all the success also come challenges, and one of the challenges that CS faces is that it has no absolute mandate in decision making policies, particularly at the national level. It is easier to participate effectively in such fora as that of the UN, but much more difficult to make impressionable impact outside of it. Additionally, the fact that CS comprises various stakeholders, some from poor countries and others from rich countries, could lead to a divide within CS itself. This divide might see poor countries unable to effectively contribute in such processes as WSIS, because lack of resources might prevent it. This might lead to decisions being made on their behalf, which might not necessarily be a true reflection of their situation.

This is more so with particularly vulnerable groups, such as those from remote rural places, whose situation and needs in the Information Society might be different from those in, for example, urban areas. Similarly, because the information social needs of women, for instance, might be different from that of men, different considerations will need to be made. However, as is often the case, women might not be equally represented in decision making as far as Internet Governance is concerned, because such areas of decision making mainly involve more men than women. This might be more so for women in developing countries, who are often marginalised in most sectors of developing societies, and the Information Society is no exception.

It is also not surprising that the CS summit statement in part bemoans the fact that “The summit was expected to identify and articulate new development possibilities and paradigms being made possible in the Information Society, and to evolve public policy options for enabling and realising these opportunities. Overall, it is impossible not to conclude that WSIS has failed to live up to these expectations. The Tunis phase
in particular, which was presented as the ‘summit of solutions,’ did not provide concrete achievements to meaningfully address development priorities.”

This is not surprising given the fact that both the WSIS Declaration of Principles and that of CS seemed to be too broad. The broadness of these declarations meant that it would be difficult to achieve specific realistic targets. In a way, they both seemed too utopian without proper consideration of the actual realities, problems of various magnitude, and concerns faced by different stakeholders.

To a certain degree, the Information Society was referred to as an answer to all social and economic ills of many a country. This is a simplistic view. Workable and realistic solutions are needed. For although there are optimistic views, such as those by Lelia Green (2002) who states that: “[T]echnology at the right time can solve most of the difficulties of modern society. [Also] technological solutions promise new answers to old problems” (2002: 171), these views should be read with caution, because although seemingly acknowledging the benefits new technologies may bring, Robin Mansell and Roger Silverstone (1997) are concerned that there could be a lack of in-depth analyses of exactly how such benefits might accrue and they indicate that: “Simplistic utopian or dystopian visions of the future provide us neither with an understanding of how these changes come about nor with an understanding of the longer-term implications” (1997: 3). This view is supported by Häyrinen-Alestalo (2001) who is concerned that “the Information Society and civil society have been introduced as a kind of super-utopia capable of revolutionary changes in the economic and social order. The strong dependencies on efficiency-driven instrumentalism and technology are so evident that collective capacity for action becomes limited” (2001, 3). Here Häyrinen-Alestalo is seemingly referring to neo-liberal policies, where there is no room for utopian thinking, because the reality is that technology is to a large extent commercially driven. And commercialisation involves a lot of hindrances, it includes some and excludes others and in this case, for those countries without commercial capacity, little can be achieved. That is why CS should continue to find other ways and means of overcoming such hindrances with solutions that take serious consideration of the realistic effect liberal and commercial environments actually have in the creation of an all-embracing Information Society.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of this research paper regarding the Roles of Civil Society, Internet Governance and Developing Countries, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Role, vision, strategy, and possible areas of intervention by civil society in the formation and implementation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) should be identified and advocated;

2. Civil society should place more emphasis on broader IG issues related to addressing the “bottom of the pyramid” of the IG community, i.e., the users in

rural areas in developing countries and public policy related discussions, rather than focussing on policy and regulatory solutions;

3. In the IGF process, effective participation of civil society from the developing countries should be ensured, especially in the international forums and consultation processes;

4. An efficient global network of civil society actors on IG issues may be established with strong participation from the developing countries to raise their voice in international forums;

5. Initiatives should be taken to build the capacity of the civil society components on IG issues in developing countries, in terms of knowledge and human capacity building, financial and technical resources. Organisations like DiploFoundation can come up with projects to support such programmes;

6. Country level initiatives on awareness, understanding, and implementation, need to be taken to focus on the public policy issues of IG at the national level to make the IGF a force;

7. Broader and workable partnerships between the stakeholders are required at all levels of the IGF process, especially scopes of civil society in the IGF, including formation and implementation;

8. Promote formation of various forums by CS on different perspectives of IG issues, such as addressing concerns over the preservation of cultural diversity and ensuring an effective voice for all cultures in the forum.

8. CONCLUSIONS BY THE IGRP TEAM ON “THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN INTERNET GOVERNANCE”

Based on our findings, analysis, and discussions, we conclude that civil society has a crucial role to play in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), especially on the debate of Internet Governance. Civil society provides valuable knowledge, expertise, and perspective to the work of WSIS. This is evident from the various perspectives raised by civil society that so far have made their way into the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

Civil society's role also includes raising awareness among governments and other sectors, of the key issues faced by people at the grass-roots level and the real needs of civil society. These needs include, among many others, universal access to information and communication technology (ICT) regardless of the capacity to use traditional or modern ICTs. It is also the role of civil society as stated in the Civil Society Declaration to gather data to justify their arguments for gender equality, promoting freedom of the press to voice civil society's concerns, human rights, and many more key issues that still prohibits civil society to participate in the Information Society.
Furthermore, civil society groups have contributed constructive comments and input into the dialogue on the issue of Internet Governance. Such hard work has required patience and commitment to ensure that the Internet Governance debate is a multistakeholder process and that the tiny voice of civil society can become louder. It is evident that civil society worked before, during and after the 3 PrepComs to review the final report of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) in which they showed support for most of the WGIG’s findings and recommendations, with minor issues they highlighted, which would not have been realised if civil society was not allowed to participate.

This research concludes that civil society groups are the sectors that address the ICT needs of those at the grass-roots level or those people that make the largest section at the bottom of the pyramid. In moving forward, we can clearly see a role for civil society in implementing the WSIS’ Plan of Action.

We recommend that there should be a post-WSIS role for civil society, especially in implementing the Plan of Action and resolving the issue of Internet Governance.

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