



# **African Participation in WSIS: review and discussion paper**

*David Souter*<sup>1</sup>

Prepared for the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)  
July 2004

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>

---

<sup>1</sup> Visiting Professor, University of Strathclyde, Scotland and Managing Director, ICT Development Associates Ltd

## Introduction

This paper presents a review of African participation in the first phase WSIS process (*i.e.* the Geneva summit held in December 2003 and the preparatory process leading up to it). It is not intended as a comprehensive analysis, but to stimulate discussion about ways in which African participation - particularly that of African civil society - can be more effectively structured during the second phase of the summit.

It is based on a variety of sources. Unfortunately, no substantive assessment of African participation in the WSIS first stage preparatory process and summit was made while that process was underway. It is difficult to assess WSIS input retrospectively from the documentation still available on the Web, particularly given the complex negotiating processes over textual phraseology that characterised much pre-summit work. This review is based on observation at the summit; discussions with participants; a review of African submissions during the preparatory process and statements in the Geneva meeting, of civil society documentation and of the limited post-Geneva literature assessing WSIS; and responses to a questionnaire addressed to participants in PrepCom3, the Geneva Summit itself and the African Civil Society Caucus.

A more thorough ongoing monitoring and evaluation of African participation during the second WSIS phase would, in the author's view, be valuable - both in focusing African dialogue on WSIS before the Tunisia session in November 2005 and in facilitating more cohesive African participation in subsequent ICT and ICT4D policymaking. One recommendation from this review is that APC (or a partner) should design and seek funding for such a process.

This paper is written from an outside (*i.e.* non-African) perspective. There are advantages and disadvantages to this. Both result from lack of direct personal engagement in the processes and internal debates of African policy development for WSIS - the disadvantages in a lack of direct personal experience of the style, the successes, the frustrations, the "feel" of the African discourse on WSIS; the advantages in lack of direct involvement on any side of any intra-African policy debate and (perhaps) in the ability to take a 'global' view of Africa's contribution, a view - that is - of how it might be seen from the WSIS participant community as a whole.

In consequence, however, this review is concerned with raising issues and suggestions that might contribute to dialogue on African participation during the second phase, rather than with making recommendations or proposals, which can only be made by those directly involved. It is intended initially for discussion at the CATIA1c workshop held in Nairobi in July 2004, and subsequently for wider dissemination.

The paper is set out as follows:

Part 1 describes the background context to WSIS, the issues under discussion and the implications for African and particularly civil society engagement.  
Part 2 comments on the processes of African participation in the first WSIS phase.  
Part 3 sets out a series of questions which it might be useful for African, and particularly civil society, participants/organisations to consider while developing approaches to the second WSIS phase.

An endnote suggests a monitoring and evaluation process that might contribute to more effective African participation in the second WSIS phase and beyond.

## **Part 1: The context for African participation in WSIS**

### **1.1 The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is the first universal global conference to address issues surrounding information and communications technologies (ICTs) and their use in development (ICT4D). It is the most recent in a long sequence of World Summits on various themes held under the auspices of the United Nations, and shares common characteristics with others in the series. In particular, it seeks to establish a global consensus on its core theme which can guide action by the international community and individual countries in the future.

The main difference between WSIS and other World Summits is that it has been organised in two phases, the first held in Geneva in December 2003, the second to be held in Tunisia in November 2005. Although this structure was more accidental than intended, it has had structural implications for the Summit's work, enabling the first session to be seen as primarily concerned with principles and an overall plan of action, with the second (potentially) focusing on more practical implementation. It has also enabled controversial issues to be deferred from the first to the second session.

All World Summits are processes more than they are events, with the final Summit conference endorsing documents negotiated over months or years of preparatory meetings. In the case of the first phase of WSIS, this was structured as follows:

A series of **regional consultations** was held between May 2002 and February 2003 in five main global regions (Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia (Middle East)). The African regional consultation was the first to be held, in May 2002 in Bamako, Mali.

These and other inputs fed into a series of **Preparatory Committees (PrepComs)** held in July 2002, February 2003 and September onwards 2003. These were the main focus for textual negotiations, and also for contests over the rights of different stakeholders to take part in the formal WSIS process. An additional intersessional negotiating meeting was held in Paris in July 2003; and a final reconvened session of PrepCom 3 was required immediately before the Summit event was held in Geneva.

The **first session of the Summit** itself was held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003. It approved the texts of two core documents.

These are the **Declaration of Principles** and the **Plan of Action**, intergovernmental agreements which form the conclusions of the first Summit. They establish a consensus which participating governments have been prepared to agree and to which, at least in theory, they can be held accountable. They are available at [http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_multi-en-1161|1160.asp](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi-en-1161|1160.asp).

As with most World Summits, an 'informal summit' of fringe activities took place alongside the formal plenary sessions attended by government delegations. In Geneva, this focused on the **ICT4D Platform**, an exhibition and meeting space for civil society and other participants held in the same conference area but separately from the formal meeting.

The first phase of WSIS was managed for the United Nations by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN body historically responsible for coordinating telecommunications policy and regulation which today also has a Telecommunication Development Bureau and aspirations to play a wider role in ICTs and ICT4D.

The first PrepCom of the second phase of WSIS took place in Hammamet, Tunisia in June 2004, and there have also been initial meetings of interest groups and on specific issues. However, progress to date on the preparatory process for the second phase has been slow, in particular in forming task forces to review two issues undecided at the first summit. The second Summit event is scheduled to be held in Tunisia in November 2005.

## **1.2 Participation in international ICT decision-making**

There are two principal difficulties surrounding participation in international decision-making, in ICT and in other sectors:

the relationship between participating countries, in particular between powerful/industrial/OECD countries on the one hand and developing/smaller countries on the other; and

the relationship between different stakeholders, in particular between governments on the one hand and the private sector and civil society on the other.

The relationship between countries

Most international decision-making fora, and United Nations institutions in particular, are built around the principle that nation-states are represented by governments, each of which has equal status. In principle, this gives Africa – with more than 50 nation-states, over a quarter of the world total – considerable potential weight, certainly well in excess of its proportion of world population (less than one in seven).

In practice, however, African and other developing countries have relatively little power within international decision-making institutions because real power is determined by economic and geopolitical factors rather than numbers of people or countries. In the case of ICT decision-making, this is exacerbated by the dominance of industrial countries in product manufacturing and in the use of ICT and telecoms equipment and services.

A precedent for dialogue between industrial and developing countries was created in the ICT4D context at the start of the decade. The G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) included representatives from the three stakeholder communities in eight industrial and eight developing countries. Although not without difficulties, this did establish dialogue across the paradigm gap between ICT and development communities (see section 1.4 below) and lead to significant outcomes. A major distinction between it and the parallel/subsequent UN ICT Task Force, and also between it and WSIS is that, as the initiative of a select group of countries, the DOT Force was not bound by the requirement of institutions including all countries to seek a global consensus on which all countries could agree. This arguably enabled it to be more creative, more selective in its conclusions, and more able to avoid the kind of textual argumentation that took place within the WSIS process.

### The *Louder Voices* analysis

The influence of developing countries in international ICT decision-making was assessed in a major study titled *Louder Voices*, which was undertaken during 2002 for the DOT Force (available at <http://www.panos.org.uk/resources/bookdetails.asp?id=1065&null=1002&>). This study, built around individual country case studies and extensive interviews, found that developing country participation was weakened by six main factors, including deficiencies in both international institutions and processes themselves and in the development of national and regional input to them. These six factors were:

lack of awareness of the potential (and limitations) of ICTs and of the implications of international ICT decisions among policymakers, particularly in government and business;

limited capacity for both technical and policy analysis in developing countries, which reduced the extent to which they could contribute to international policy discourse;

poor national policymaking processes, in particular lack of dialogue between government departments responsible for ICTs and for mainstream development activity, and between government, the private sector and civil society;

inadequate information, particularly information of use to non-specialists, about the issues under discussion in international decision-making fora;

inefficient working methods within international fora, including processes that make it more difficult for developing countries to participate effectively (for example, holding preparatory meetings at global rather than regional level; holding parallel sessions that require larger delegations); and

ineffective use of financial resources for representation by developing country governments, including the exclusion of private sector and civil society expertise from delegations.

Government and other organisations might review the findings and recommendations of the *Louder Voices* report in considering ways of improving their input to the second phase of WSIS.

#### 1.2.3 The relationship between stakeholders

Much of the *Louder Voices* analysis focuses on weaknesses in national policymaking, particularly the absence in many countries of multistakeholder dialogue, *i.e.* of policymaking fora that bring together views from government, the private sector and civil society at a national level.

Multistakeholder participation in international decision-making fora has long been contested. Many governments have been reluctant to give the private sector and civil society a formal voice in international decision-making processes, arguing that sovereign nations can only be represented by governments. Relatively few have included private sector and civil society representatives in national delegations, in spite of rhetoric about the importance of multistakeholder participation or of private sector investment.

Stakeholder participation in WSIS was contested throughout the preparatory

process, and arguments about whether and to what extent non-government stakeholders should be allowed to participate preoccupied (or wasted, according to viewpoint) much PrepCom time. The underlying reasons are only partly to do with principles of representation; they are also partly to do with content (*i.e.* differences of viewpoint between governments and other stakeholders about appropriate issues for consideration).

Arguments over representation undermined private sector engagement in the first phase of the WSIS process, and frustrated civil society representatives (as well as diverting much civil society energy from issues of substance to issues of process). Civil society itself was also sometimes disunited. At the end of the Geneva Summit, the WSIS Civil Society Plenary issued an alternative Summit statement to that produced by governments in plenary session. (This is available at [http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_multi.asp?lang=en?&id=1179|1208](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en?&id=1179|1208).)

### **1.3 What are ICTs / what is the Information Society?**

Neither of the final documents of the WSIS first phase (the *Declaration of Principles* or the *Plan of Action*) clearly defines what is meant by ICTs. Nor do they clearly define the relationship between ICTs, the 'Information Society' and social and economic development. Different delegations and stakeholders at WSIS clearly held different views of what the Summit was about. The key 'unanswered' questions are as follows:

Does the term 'ICTs' apply to all information and communications technologies (including, for example, print media and broadcast radio), to telecommunications-based products and services, to new digital technologies, or to computing/IT activities?

Are ICTs more important as an industrial sector in their own right or as contributors to other sectors and to general economic growth?

What is the relationship between ICTs (the means of information and communication) and knowledge (the application of information gained to human behaviour)?

What is or would be an Information Society? Do ICTs have as great a potential to transform society as the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions of the past? And, if so, can this transformation be made more equal and more egalitarian than they?

Do citizens or communities have rights to information and to communication, and how might these be defined in an 'Information Society' age?

In practice, diverse understandings of the meaning of ICTs and of the 'Information Society' can coexist – the value of diversity is, after all, acknowledged in international agreements – but confusion will arise for policy and implementation if statements rely on ambiguity to achieve agreement and can therefore be interpreted differently by different stakeholders. International agreements such as Summit statements have always found it difficult to accommodate diversity of opinion, and this may be an especial difficulty in a rapidly changing context such as ICTs.

### **1.4 ICTs and ICT4D**

Today's enthusiasm for ICT4D is very new. Until about the mid-1990s, most

development specialists did not consider ICTs to have significant developmental value. Since initiation of the DOT Force in 2000 this perception has largely been reversed, at least in terms of rhetoric, and very substantial hopes have now been invested by many in ICTs' potential to deliver economic growth and mainstream developmental goals. These hopes form the basis of the (generally very optimistic) ICT strategies that have been developed in many countries.

At the same time, there is continued concern about the 'digital divide', *i.e.* the possibility that rapid ICT development will exacerbate rather than diminish the imbalance in wealth and access to resources between 'haves' and 'have-nots', whether at a global, regional, national or local level, between populations as a whole and specific population groups (women and men, landless and landowning, non-literate and literate, *etc.*). Many ICT4D fora oscillate between enthusiasm for digital opportunities and anxiety about the digital divide.

One of the main difficulties in ICT4D decision-making has been the paradigm gap between those with expertise in ICTs (particularly telecommunications) and development specialists. This is evident, for example, at the ITU's World Telecommunication Development Conferences (which have been dominated by telecoms specialists largely concerned with the development of telecommunications rather than the relationship between telecommunications and development).

Most of the ICT4D debate to date has been conducted amongst ICT professionals and the relatively small group of ICT4D specialists within the development community and developing country governments. There is much less agreement that the value of ICTs is either substantial or yet proven among mainstream development professionals, for example in health or agriculture sectors, within government departments, donor agencies or multilateral agencies. For many of these, ICTs are not yet seen as having the transforming power attributed to them by ICT4D enthusiasts, and some have considerable anxieties over the distributional impact of ICTs (the impact of digital divide on other development divides, such as access to education, land *etc.*).

This difference of perspective between ICT/ICT4D professionals and mainstream development specialists has been inadequately addressed in much of the ICT4D debate, partly because that debate has been conducted largely within the ICT/ICT4D community (see section NUMBER below). It is particularly important today in two contexts:

Multilateral agencies and bilateral donors are increasingly focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the development targets established by the United Nations for achievement by or around 2015. All development initiatives are increasingly being focused on achievement of these (rather ambitious) goals.

Partly in consequence, multilateral agencies and bilateral donors increasingly see ICTs as playing an instrumental role in delivering the MDGs rather than having development value as a sector in themselves. This is generally described as 'mainstreaming' of ICTs, and means that development agency attention is focused on:

the application of ICTs to particular MDGs and other mainstream development sectors (*e.g.* food security); and

the establishment of enabling frameworks to promote private sector investment in access to ICTs and other 'development of ICTs' or 'development of

telecommunications' issues (rather than the use of development funds for this purpose).

This has implications, for example, for the approach of such agencies to the proposed Digital Solidarity Fund.

A key problem underlying the current ICT4D debate is the lack of substantial researched evidence about the impact of ICTs on economic growth and social development in developing countries. Many of the assumptions often made are currently untested. Among the most important questions that need more detailed investigation are:

The significance and changing nature of the digital divide. Approaches aimed at 'bridging the digital divide' often assume that it is static and can be bridged by rapid advances among the disadvantaged. In practice, the relatively advantaged continue to gain access to new resources at an accelerated rate during such interventions.

The impact of ICT investment on economic growth. Evidence from OECD countries shows that this is highly dependent on complementary factors such as existing educational capacity, organisational change and the overall investment framework, as well as on network externalities (*i.e.* the extent to which ICT networks already exist). The implications of this for developing country economies with smaller ICT-related markets are not well understood.

The distributional impact of ICT access and use, *i.e.* the question whether access to ICTs tends to reinforce or undermine existing divisions in society (*e.g.* between rich and poor, men and women, landed and landless).

The cost-effectiveness of ICT use in achieving mainstream development goals in areas such as health, education and agricultural productivity, whether alone or in conjunction with other more traditional development interventions.

The scalability and replicability of ICT4D interventions within communities, countries and regions.

Organisations might consider the implications of these issues and questions in developing their priorities for the second phase of WSIS, which is intended to establish parameters for practical implementation based on the broad principles set out in the first phase final documents.

## **1.5 The WSIS texts**

Four major issues were effectively left unresolved at the end of the first phase of WSIS, all of which are likely to play an important part in the second phase. They are:

the role of non-governmental actors in the preparatory phase and negotiation of WSIS texts;  
the inclusion of rights-based issues in WSIS texts, in particular references to human rights and the 'right to communicate';  
future Internet governance (in particular the role of ICANN); and  
the proposal by the President of Senegal and some other (mostly African) delegations to establish a Digital Solidarity Fund.

The first and second of these issues preoccupied much of the earlier stages of first phase PrepComs, while the third and fourth, particularly the Digital Solidarity Fund, took the first phase preparatory process to the brink of breakdown immediately before the Geneva meeting.

The Geneva Summit established that task forces / working groups would be initiated to review issues of Internet governance and the proposed Digital Solidarity Fund, and report on these to the second Summit in 2005. The international system has been slow to initiate these task forces / working groups. Although there is scope for a wide range of approaches to both Internet governance and ICT4D finance, both debates were, by the time of the Geneva Summit, politicised and polarised; and there is a significant risk that the second Summit will focus on disputes between polar positions on these issues rather than on implementation of the wider range of issues set out in the Geneva Action Plan.

This paper does not review these issues but organisations should consider both their own approaches to them and the extent to which they wish to prioritise them in their WSIS work.

## **Part 2: African participation in the first stage of WSIS**

The structure for the first phase of WSIS is set out in section 1.1 above. In principle, this gave considerable scope for African governments, at least, to participate in the development of the Summit's themes and outputs – both through the formal PrepCom process and through regional and continental collaboration.

### **2.1 National, regional and continental participation**

The formal WSIS structure set up two processes for the development of themes and outputs – regional/continental conferences, one of which was held in Africa, and global PrepComs, in which all governments/countries could participate.

For most African countries, this meant that consideration of WSIS issues took place at two levels – national and continental. There was very little discussion of WSIS issues at a regional level within the continent, even it would seem within the established regional geopolitical groupings (such as COMESA, the East African Community, ECOWAS and SADC).

#### **2.1.1. National participation**

Experience at national level varied. The *Louder Voices* report noted that most developing country ICT policy-making processes lack effective procedures for the involvement of multiple stakeholders (especially the private sector and civil society) and even for interdepartmental dialogue within government (for example, between communications ministries and those responsible for mainstream development activities). Reports from those engaged in WSIS-related activity at a national level show that this remained true in many countries (not just in Africa) during the WSIS process, and that as a result policymaking on WSIS issues was either left to PrepCom and Summit delegations or conducted on an *ad hoc* basis.

A number of governments, however – for example, those of Mali and Tanzania – did institute significant consultation processes either within government or involving wider stakeholder groups; and some of these also included private sector and civil

society representatives in delegations. Not surprisingly, this approach appears to have been concentrated in countries which had paid more attention in general to ICT policy pre-WSIS.

It is difficult to get a clear view of the quality of these national processes from the limited responses made by PrepCom and Summit delegates to the questionnaire undertaken for this review. Some comments were relatively positive; others dismissive of the value, scale and inclusiveness of national policy dialogues. A fair summary would be, however, that, although there were significant exceptions, the majority of African delegations to PrepComs and the Geneva Summit:

were not well informed by national policy dialogue and, in particular, by the views and perspectives of the private sector and civil society, of women, and of those engaged in mainstream development sectors;  
had undertaken little intra-governmental dialogue between delegations, ICT ministries and developmental ministries;  
and had weak 'chains of command' between delegations and national policymakers in-country, so that decisions on negotiating positions were likely to be taken on an *ad hoc* basis by delegations.

Summit activities received little publicity in national media and there is little evidence in most countries of any extensive report-back procedure post-WSIS that would facilitate more effective national participation in the second phase. In the author's view, it would be worth APC or another agency assessing perceptions, within a wider stakeholder group, of a number of national experiences during and since the first phase of WSIS in order to see what 'best practice' lessons might be learnt and disseminated for WSIS II.

#### Continental participation

The formal WSIS consultation process sought to aggregate regional input at a continental level, through continental conferences – one each for Africa, the Asia/Pacific region, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia (Middle East).

In Africa's case, this consultation conference was held in Bamako, Mali, in May 2002, before the first of the global PrepComs. No further continental conferences were held, though a Bamako Bureau was established to coordinate input to WSIS at a continental level during the remainder of the process. At a formal continental level, African input to the WSIS process therefore primarily took the form of two documents: the Bamako Declaration, *i.e.* the output of the Bamako meeting in May 2002, and a list of priorities agreed by the Bamako Bureau and delegates to PrepCom 2 following a meeting in Paris in July 2003.

Attendance at the Bamako meeting was substantial (see Annex B). Altogether, 1785 delegates registered for the meeting, and, although 1095 of these were from Mali and 111 from outside Africa, the total of 579 from the rest of the continent was certainly considerable. Only 5 of the 54 African countries were unrepresented. Unfortunately, the participation lists now available on the Web do not allow participants to be disaggregated into stakeholder categories or by gender. Civil society was, however, significantly represented and was able to secure the inclusion of significant text (including support for civil society participation in the overall WSIS process) into the report which the Bamako meeting submitted to the first PrepCom. There were also a series of 14 pre-conference workshops addressing specific issues (see page 2 of Annex A).

The Bamako event was held right at the start of the WSIS process. This had three major impacts on the kind of input made at an African continental level:

It was essentially concerned with the initial stages of the WSIS process, *i.e.* with the identification of themes and with the WSIS process itself, not with the prioritisation of issues or the development of strategic approaches to them.

It was held before participants – whether from government, private sector or civil society – had had the opportunity to discuss WSIS issues thoroughly at a stakeholder group or national level, and was therefore less coherent or comprehensive in its outcomes than it might have been if held at a later period.

It gave Africa no continent-wide opportunity to respond to the input made by other regional conferences, to the debates taking place within the PrepComs or to WSIS themes and issues as they became defined in drafts of the final output documents. (All the other regional conferences at least took place after PrepCom 1.)

The Bamako event therefore gave Africa at a continental level the opportunity to set out an opening position in the WSIS debate but not to contribute a continental view throughout the process.

The Bamako Declaration is attached as Annex A (and was reported to PrepCom 2 alongside the outputs of other regional conferences). Not surprisingly, in the circumstances, it took as one basis a reaffirmation of earlier stated African positions (notably the 1996 African Information Society Initiative, the 1999 African Development Forum and NEPAD's commitments on ICTs and ICT4D), but these earlier documents could provide only relatively weak guidance for African participation as the PrepCom process developed and WSIS issues evolved. Equally unsurprisingly, since WSIS' internal debates had not then begun, it took a rather general view of the issues and of African priorities. However, it placed more emphasis on some civil society concerns (such as inclusiveness, freedom of expression and rights to access information) than appeared in some other WSIS preparatory documents.

The following core messages could be drawn out in particular from the Declaration:

the need for the Information Society to be inclusive and to reach all citizens;  
the need for all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, to play a prominent role in decision-making and delivery;  
the need to use diverse technological approaches; and  
the importance of networking, local content and capacity-building (all major themes throughout the WSIS process).

The origins of the subsequent proposal for a Digital Solidarity Fund can be discerned in the Declaration's review of 'what the information society could bring to Africa', though in a much abbreviated form. There was no overall agenda for development intervention agreed. Concrete proposal for ICT4D interventions were limited to brief references to the rural environment, public access, education and training, new applications and pilot studies.

The other significant document which might be regarded as African continental input within the formal process was a list of 21 priorities submitted following a meeting held by the Bamako Bureau with African participants during PrepCom 2 in Paris in July and reported to PrepCom 3 in September 2003. This list reads as

follows and, in practice, covers many of the issues included in the final documents.

- Infrastructure and maintenance of infrastructure and equipment
- Human resource development and capacity building
- Gender issues and women empowerment in ICTs uses
- Partnership between public and private sectors
- Debt conversion ( to backup ICTs development)
- Environment protection
- Open and free software
- National information and communication strategies with special support to the African Information Society Initiative (AISII)
- Sectoral applications
- Support to NEPAD
- Digital Solidarity Fund
- Technology transfer, particularly South to South transfer
- Research and Development
- Investment strategies
- Content development
- Internet governance
- Relations between traditional media and new ICTs
- Legislative and regulatory framework
- Intellectual property rights
- Security
- Regional cooperation

Very few explanatory words were attached to this list. (For example, item 3, 'Gender issues', had the explanatory addition 'This aspect is considered as being transversal to all issues and is developed in the action plan.')

In addition, the list was simply too long and too undifferentiated to have been regarded by other participants as a meaningful set of priorities. Although most of the points listed were therefore included in one form or another in the final Summit texts, it did not provide a basis for African delegations to focus on key points of particular importance to Africa or on an 'African perspective' or nuance on which wider agreement could be sought; and it would be difficult therefore to assert that it played a significant part in the outcomes of the Summit.

### 2.1.3 Regional participation

Formal input to the WSIS process was, as noted above, organised by the WSIS Secretariat at a continental level.

Much African inter-national coordination, however, takes place at a regional level in institutions such as COMESA, ECOWAS and SADC. These have played a particularly significant role in some aspects of ICTs, such as telecommunications regulation. They did not, however, play any significant role in the development of common African positions for WSIS (or of sub-continental regional positions which might have had more resonance with national stakeholders). None made formal contributions or submissions to WSIS during the first phase (nor, with the exception of UNECA, did African continental bodies).

Governments and organisations, including African regional bodies, might consider whether a regional approach to WSIS policymaking might be more productive during the second phase. Countries within sub-continental regions (such as Southern Africa) share more common characteristics than does Africa continentally, and are often better placed to coordinate amongst themselves and to share

representative or negotiating functions. (The European Union's experience is a case in point.) This can enhance rather than diminish the coherence of continental input.

## 2.2 Composition of delegations

Participation of individual African countries in the PrepComs and the final Summit was uneven. A small number of countries maintained a substantial presence throughout the process – notably Mali, South Africa and Tanzania. Others were barely represented – for example, the Central African Republic which took part in no PrepComs and sent only two officials to Geneva.

Numbers of participants by country in the Bamako meeting, the three PrepComs and the Geneva Summit are set out in the table at Annex B. The following paragraphs summarise some of the main findings from an analysis of these participant lists.

Total participation by African countries in the PrepComs increased over time, from 175 African participants in PrepCom 1 to 309 in PrepCom 2 and 333 in PrepCom 3. Of these, 161, 244 and 254 respectively were members of official national delegations, the remainder attending through accredited business organizations or (more usually) NGOs. Between 10 and 15 African countries were unrepresented at each PrepCom, while some a few countries (Cameroon, Mali, South Africa, Tanzania and Tunisia in particular) sent large delegations (over 40 from South Africa attended PrepCom 3). Six African countries were unrepresented at the Geneva Summit itself, which was attended by a total of 892 official African delegates, the largest delegations being from South Africa (78), Gabon (66) and Nigeria (64).

Although the Summit's themes are primarily developmental, most African delegations were dominated throughout the process by telecommunications specialists (from communications ministries and telecommunications regulatory bodies) and diplomats (versed in the niceties of negotiating international agreements). One third of delegates at PrepCom 1 could be categorised as diplomats, and a quarter of those at PrepComs 2 and 3. The proportion coming from telecommunications ministries, regulators and incumbent telcos together at each PrepCom was even higher – 39%, 33% and 36% respectively, while the percentage from other branches of government never exceeded 17% (at PrepCom 2). Attendance from other parts of government was boosted at the Geneva Summit by the entourages of Heads of State and Government, but even so over 25% of delegates in African national delegations were from telecommunications ministries, regulators or incumbent telcos.

Even at the summit, it was ministers of communications and their staff who mostly represented governments, although a few delegations did also include ministers and representatives of frontline development ministries (usually governments that had paid more attention to the overall WSIS process). This inevitably limited the ability of delegations to present the key development issues – the ICT4D issues – in negotiations, and may have contributed to the priority gained by issues of communications rather than development policy (notably Internet governance).

Very few African delegations included private sector representatives, although these were involved in a number of the larger delegations such as those of South Africa and Tanzania. Altogether, 2.5% of African official delegates at the Summit came from the private sector (other than incumbent telcos) – 22 delegates from a total of 10 countries. This compared with 36 delegates from incumbent telcos in 17

countries. Very few African telecommunications businesses were accredited as business delegations to the PrepComs – the highest number being 6 at PrepCom 2. It is not possible accurately to identify accredited business delegates from Africa separately from the published Summit participants list.

Only a handful of African official delegations included civil society representatives at any PrepCom, and only 12 civil society representatives were listed as included in official delegations to the Geneva Summit, from seven countries. (It is, however, difficult to assess data for the Geneva Summit meeting itself with certainty as some delegations gave very little information about delegation members in the official delegates' list for that meeting. Some of those listed as 'advisors' or 'representatives' may have been from non-governmental backgrounds.) There was much more substantial participation from civil society than private sector delegates attending through accredited non-governmental organizations, however, with 12 such delegates at PrepCom 1, 59 at PrepCom 2 and 75 at PrepCom 3. (As with accredited business delegations, published participant data for the Geneva Summit does not allow African delegates in this category to be separated out effectively.)

Women were also underrepresented in official delegations throughout the WSIS process (insofar as the participant lists allow gender disaggregation). The highest proportion of women delegates from Africa was 27% in PrepCom 3; the lowest under 15% at PrepCom 1. South Africa had the highest representation of women, including a majority of its very large delegation at PrepCom 3 (without which the overall proportion of women at that meeting would have been substantially lower). About 15 of the African countries represented at the Geneva summit sent delegations without any female members.

This distribution of representation was not, of course, exclusively African. It may well have been an unintended outcome of the ITU's lead role in organising the first WSIS phase: governments may well have assumed from this that the appropriate representation for WSIS was the same as for other ITU events, *i.e.* industrial/sectoral rather than developmental. (Departments of communications are also likely to have been reluctant to cede control of matters seen as falling within the telecommunications mandate.)

Whatever the reason, however, this outcome must have affected the quality of negotiation from a development perspective. However expert in their own fields, diplomats, telecoms engineers and telecoms economists need expertise from development specialists and those in mainstream development fields if they are to contribute effectively to decisions about how ICTs can be most effectively deployed in those fields. This is a lesson that African governments might beneficially review for phase two of the process, which is not led by the ITU and which is meant to address implementation issues across the development agenda.

It is unclear from published documents to what extent delegates from different countries worked together during PrepCom sessions to coordinate input. Participation in working groups is also insufficiently recorded, at least in Web-available sources, to enable much worthwhile analysis of African involvement in these, whether on an individual or coordinated basis. Much of the work of international negotiations of all kinds, however, revolves around caucusing and – with the exception of the issue of the Digital Solidarity Fund towards the end of the first phase process – it is not clear that African continental caucusing was particularly effective. Analysis of this aspect of participation during the second phase of the Summit would be particularly valuable for the future.

### 2.3 Private sector engagement

It is almost universally agreed, even by those suspicious of private sector motives, that the private sector has a central role to play in the deployment of ICTs in Africa, particularly in the provision of access and the establishment of infrastructure necessary for the deployment of ICT4D initiatives.

In the circumstances, and particularly given its sectoral focus, private sector participation in the Summit as a whole was disappointing. The International Chamber of Commerce organised a Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors, which coordinated private sector involvement, engaged with civil society representatives and issued statements on key issues within the Summit, particularly on Internet governance. (Its final WSIS statement is available at [http://businessatwsis.net/mainpages/media/press/news.php?news\\_id=22&PHPSESSID=01c4eeae7b67d7aa03984d0beb75c5d0](http://businessatwsis.net/mainpages/media/press/news.php?news_id=22&PHPSESSID=01c4eeae7b67d7aa03984d0beb75c5d0).) Many individual private sector participants involved in the early stages of the preparatory process expressed frustration at its concentration on procedural matters, poor understanding of private sector objectives and the desire of some delegations to exclude the private sector from discussions of policy objectives it would need to implement.

Participation by African private sector organisations was particularly disappointing. As noted above, very few African businesses participated in PrepComs as part of national delegations, and even fewer on behalf of accredited business organisations. Only a handful of African delegations to PrepComs or the Geneva Summit included private sector representatives (though more included representatives of the former incumbent fixed line telecommunications operators). New Internet businesses were notably absent.

Some national stakeholder dialogues during the WSIS process did engage with local private sector representatives, but such dialogue does not appear to have been widespread. Equally, it is difficult to find much evidence of significant dialogue between civil society and African ICT businesses on WSIS-related issues.

More involvement by African private sector ICT businesses – large and small scale – would probably have improved input into the process in three ways:

- by increasing understanding of the practical economics of ICT deployment in low-income communities (particularly demand);
- by increasing understanding of the technical requirements and solutions being developed within specifically African contexts;
- and by equipping African businesses more effectively to contribute to the delivery of WSIS/ICT4D goals in future.

Governments and other organisations might consider how to ensure more effective participation by the African private sector in the second phase of the Summit.

### 2.4 Civil society engagement

Like government participation, significant civil society engagement with WSIS seems to have taken place at national and continental levels but not at a regional level.

Civil society is, of course, very diverse, and different civil society organizations had different priorities for participation. To a large extent, this diversity is issue-based – some civil society organizations are concerned with human rights, for example;

others with gender issues; others with rural livelihoods. An important distinction can also be drawn between different types and degrees of engagement with ICTs, perhaps into four categories as follows:

organisations directly concerned with ICTs themselves (as a sector or an instrument of civil society organisation);  
those concerned with ICTs as a focus for development;  
those concerned with them as a potential tool in delivering other developmental goals;  
and those concerned with using them to improve their own organisation and networking.

In international fora such as WSIS, civil society generally seeks to speak with a common voice built around a shared approach – with varying degrees of success depending on the saliency of issues and range of opinions that need to be brought within consensus.

An African Civil Society Caucus was organised to support civil society coordination in WSIS. This played a significant part in the Bamako meeting at the start of the WSIS process and in subsequent discussions, in liaison with the Bamako Bureau and with the global civil society caucus. Its impact after the Bamako meeting was probably hampered by the lack of further continent-wide official lobbying opportunities, leaving coordinated activity with other civil society organisations at PrepComs as the main focus for activity. (It is difficult to assess liaison with the Bamako Bureau from the available information.)

As with the private sector, African civil society participation in official delegations was limited throughout the WSIS first phase process. However, a significant number of African civil society delegates - 59 and 75 respectively - took part in PrepComs 2 and 3 on behalf of accredited NGOs.

APC has undertaken a survey to assess views of African Civil Society Caucus participants, though with limited returns, and some responses have also been received to a questionnaire issued for this review. These responses suggest that African civil society suffered from a number of problems, including:

shortage of resources, particularly financial resources, to enable effective coordination;  
shortage of personnel, leaving a few individuals shouldering too many responsibilities;  
lack of planning, making participation in PrepComs reactive rather than proactive;  
lack of clarity about objectives and strategies, leading to sudden and sometimes poorly communicated changes of direction.

A more comprehensive survey of experience during the first phase would undoubtedly help to enhance civil society coordination during the second.

At the summit itself, the **ICT4D Platform** – which offered civil society and other organisations exhibition space and an extensive programme of fringe meetings – was generally considered a success. It certainly gave civil society organisations an opportunity to network and share information on a scale and with a geographical breadth which had not previously been open to them. If such networking is sustained during the second phase of WSIS, it may help to position African circumstances and priorities more effectively within a global context.

It is less clear what impact the ICT4D Platform had on official delegates. Some senior figures made formal visits to it, but many did not, and the physical isolation of the plenary session from the wider summit did not encourage cross-fertilisation.

## **2.5 WSIS outcomes and documents**

The final documents from the first phase of WSIS – the *Declaration of Principles* and the *Plan of Action* – are comprehensive, even all-embracing in their coverage of issues. Rather than selecting priorities, negotiators during the PrepComs tended to aggregate issues proposed for inclusion. In consequence, it would be possible to say that most of the priorities identified at the Bamako meeting and in the Paris list are included in the final first phase documents, but not necessarily that they were given particular attention or that their relationship to other aspects of the final documents was fully considered.

The main exceptions to this inclusive approach to content were the two issues deferred to the second phase of WSIS – Internet governance and the proposed Digital Solidarity Fund. The latter of these was largely promoted by African governments, which were unable to secure the support of industrial country (bilateral donor) governments, for three principal reasons:

uncertainty within donors about the risk of diverting resources to ICT4D from more proven areas of development intervention;  
uncertainty about the objectives which would be pursued by the Fund if established;  
and uncertainty about the desirability of establishing another independent sectoral institution to manage interventions aimed primarily at mainstream development goals.

As noted above, the DSF proposal is to be considered by a separate working group ahead of the second Summit session.

## **Part 3: Questions for consideration ahead of WSIS phase II**

This third section of the paper raises a number of questions which African organizations, and civil society in particular, might consider worth discussing in developing their approach to WSIS II. The paper does not take a view on these, other than to suggest that the effectiveness of input is likely to be greater if they have been considered than if they have not.

### **3.1 To what extent is participation in WSIS II worthwhile?**

Very few organisations involved in ICTs or ICT4D have chosen to ignore the WSIS process. Most have seen it as an opportunity – either to promote particular policy positions or to generate interest, partnerships and funding. After the first phase, it is easier to assess what value can be derived from it in fact, and where resources can be most effectively targeted for the second phase.

Participation in the WSIS process is costly in both time and resources. These are in short supply in all stakeholder groups in Africa, and need to be used productively. Resources devoted to WSIS, which deals largely in texts and principles, are likely to be diverted from activities which deal more directly with practical implementation. There is therefore a trade-off to be made between the long-term value of establishing principles and targets through WSIS and the short-term value of using

the same resources for more immediate activity in-country.

World summits have a tendency to suck in more resources to them than anticipated from the outset. Governments and other organisations could begin by assessing the extent of resources that can sensibly be devoted to WSIS in this context.

### **3.2 What is the value of consensus?**

Africa is a diverse continent, with diverse national experience. Civil society is a diverse grouping with diverse interests. ICTs offer individuals and communities the opportunity to adopt diverse, appropriately tailored approaches to their own diverse requirements.

The value of diversity itself is often commended in international agreements, particularly by civil society. Yet much energy is expended in international negotiations on securing agreement on particular forms of words which reflect consensus or the victory of a particular point of view. The risk in such agreements is that they reach the lowest common denominator of consensus or that they pretend consensus exists where it does not.

Organisations might consider the balance between the value of achieving a common position or securing victory for a particular textual formulation against the value of acknowledging the significance of diversity and individual/community/national choice. Consensus may, for example, be more valuable in some contexts and unnecessary in others.

### **3.3 Does Africa need (or have) a common position?**

Question 3.2 can be applied more specifically to Africa. African governments are, for geopolitical reasons, often keen to establish a common African position on particular issues. In the case of WSIS, this search for continental consensus was fostered by a preparatory process that allowed for continental input but provided no basis for input at a sub-continental regional level.

African governments/countries have some common interests which can be best promoted by continental consensus. But Africa is also very diverse – regionally, politically and economically. Meaningful continental consensus may be impossible to achieve in many areas, where national or regional consensus may be more appropriate. Organisations might consider where African consensus is most appropriate and where it might be less productive. (Much the same applies to civil society organisations with different priority concerns.)

At the same time, experience in other international negotiations shows the value that can lie in cross-continental cooperation between developing countries. According to context, this can be limited or enhanced by the search for continental consensus. Organisations might consider where cross-continental could be more productive than continental cooperation.

### **3.4 How should African input be structured?**

The previous questions raise further issues about the structure of Africa's input into WSIS. In particular:

### **3.5 What is the right balance between national, regional and continental input?**

Africa has a variety of well-established regional organisations (COMESA, the East African Community, ECOWAS, SADC *etc.*). These played very little part in discussions on African input to the first phase of WSIS. (Elsewhere, sub-continental regional institutions like the European Union and the Pacific islands' various regional fora seem to have played a more substantial part in contributing to continental debate.)

Would African input to WSIS' second phase be improved if these regional organisations played an intermediary role, coordinating national views within their regions before these are discussed at continental level through an equivalent of the 2002 Bamako conference?

### **3.6 When is the most effective time for continental input to be made?**

The Bamako conference was held right at the beginning of the first phase of WSIS. For reasons discussed in section 2.1.2 above, this limited the impact which African input had on many of the key issues which arose during the WSIS process. In particular, it meant that the wider African stakeholder community had no continental opportunity to comment on WSIS issues as they evolved.

Would African input to WSIS' second phase be more effective if it were differently timetabled or structured – for example, if there were two continental meetings? if a single continental meeting were held at a later stage in the preparatory process? or if ongoing dialogue on a continental level could be conducted through other means such as inter-regional dialogue or electronic discussion groups?

### **3.7 What is WSIS primarily about – ICTs or development?**

There is some ambiguity in the nature of WSIS itself. Its origins lay in a resolution of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference, which envisaged a summit organised by the ITU, 'the organization best able to seek appropriate ways to provide for development of the telecommunication sector geared to economic, social and cultural development,' which would address 'the interpenetration between issues of telecommunication development and those of economic, social and cultural development.' [Note, in particular, the references to 'telecommunication' rather than 'ICTs'.] It was the UN General Assembly that subsequently translated this into a summit that would focus on ICTs more widely and on development in the context of the UN Millennium Declaration (and so the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs).

This ambiguity remained present throughout the first phase of WSIS, notably in the ITU's central role in what appeared increasingly a development-oriented event, and in the domination of PrepCom and Summit delegations, despite this, by (tele)communications rather than mainstream development specialists. The increasing emphasis of multilateral and bilateral donors on the MDGs during the first phase period made this more important.

It would help the cohesion of WSIS' second phase if this ambiguity of role were clarified at an organisational level. Organisations might consider its implications for their approach to WSIS, the balance of emphasis they would prefer between ICT sectoral and mainstream development objectives, and how they wish to address

this in their own countries.

### **3.8 Who should play the primary role in setting Africa's priorities and positions?**

As noted in section 2.2 above, African (and global) participation in the first phase of WSIS was dominated by ICT specialists (in telecoms or ICT4D) and meetings were attended by few specialists in other development fields. This suggests that preparatory policymaking was also dominated by ICT rather than mainstream development expertise.

An international forum populated by specialists in any sector is likely to take a sectoral rather than a global view of the issues with which it is concerned. A conference of health specialists, for example, will stress the role of health/medicine in development and call for more funding for health initiatives; a conference of education specialists will do the same for education; as will a conference of agricultural advisors for food security. WSIS, as a conference of ICT specialists, is no different. Insofar as it seeks to focus ICTs on mainstream development goals, however, its outcomes will only be considered valid by specialists (ministries, development agencies, *etc.*) in those areas if they have been engaged in their development and are in fundamental agreement with them.

Governments and other organisations might consider how to ensure a more balanced consideration of WSIS issues between ICT professionals and mainstream development specialists and ministries.

### **3.9 What are Africa's (continental) priorities?**

The Paris meeting of African delegations organised by the Bamako Bureau in July 2003 identified a list of 21 priorities for Africa which it hoped would be addressed by WSIS.

Priorities are, by definition, issues that should be dealt with first. Too many priorities means that too little attention is devoted to any of them, both by their proponents and by the wider community to whom they are proposed. It suggests that agreement is being reached by listing aspirations rather than by choosing those issues that require most or most immediate attention (a common failing in international negotiations).

Interviews with non-African delegates at the Geneva WSIS meeting suggest that Africa's priorities were unclear to them. Organisations might consider how the process of developing African input to the second phase could identify clear and clearly thought-out priorities on which delegations could focus their attention during negotiations. The intended focus of the second phase on practical implementation should be borne in mind in this context.

Again, much the same question can be addressed to civil society organisations as to Africa as a whole. One way in which 'real' priorities can be identified is to require meetings to narrow down lists such as that emerging from the Paris meeting until a maximum of, say, five issues remains on which resources can then be concentrated.

### **3.10 What would assist delegates in promoting these priorities?**

The Geneva Summit of WSIS arguably marked a highpoint in international enthusiasm for ICT4D. There are signs that this enthusiasm and optimism are beginning to wane in international agencies and bilateral donors. A key reason for this is that there is still a lack of solid research evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of ICTs in many mainstream development areas (see section 1.4 above).

Such evidence will be more important if the second phase of WSIS concentrates more on practical implementation. Most contributions to the first phase made generally positive assumptions about ICT4D, while much of the evidence adduced in their support was based on pilot projects or limited experience. These assumptions need to be backed by more evidence demonstrating positive impacts (successes), limitations (including failures) and distributional impacts of ICTs in mainstream development areas if they are to secure global support for appropriate funding initiatives.

Organisations might consider how, in the period between now and the second Summit, they can generate more and better quality impact assessments of ICTs in development which will help the international community, in particular in differentiating between areas in which ICTs can have a major impact over a short period and those in which their impact is insubstantial, less substantial or longer term. Particular attention might be paid to the MDGs and to the distributional impact of ICTs (*i.e.* the relationship between the digital divide and other internal development divides).

### **3.11 The deferred issues**

Two issues were deferred at the Geneva Summit to task forces / working groups which are due to report to the second WSIS Summit – Internet governance and the proposal for a Digital Solidarity Fund promoted by the President of Senegal and a number of other African governments.

The working group due to address the latter issue has not yet been established. This working group is intended to review the DSF proposal alongside existing mechanisms for funding ICT4D initiatives. If it does not achieve consensus, there is a risk that the second Summit will be preoccupied with a debate between entrenched polar positions on this issue.

A number of key questions need to be addressed in this context, in particular:

- what resources would be available to any DSF?
- would these be additional to or redistributed from other international (multilateral and bilateral) development funds?
- what would be the focus of any DSF that was established (infrastructure? access? applications? in what sectors?)?
- how would a sectoral DSF relate to the mainstreaming of ICTs in development and to the MDGs?
- what management structures would be required and (why) would these be preferable to existing development agencies (including the established UN bodies)?

The debate on this issue will be most constructive if these questions have been considered fully by all participants. Organisations might consider how they can make the most effective contribution to them.

### **3.12 How should national policymaking for WSIS be coordinated?**

While some African governments/countries organised significant multistakeholder consultation processes during the first phase of WSIS, this was not the general experience. Many governments did not hold stakeholder dialogue conferences or consult widely with the private sector and civil society. Few countries saw any significant media debate about WSIS. And most delegations to WSIS PrepComs and the Summit itself were dominated by a narrow group of ICT or even telecommunications professionals.

Governments and other organisations could review the way in which they developed their input to the first phase of WSIS, draw lessons from those countries that undertook more substantial internal consultation processes and seek to formulate policies and approaches more directly addressing their national circumstances in conjunction with expertise from across government (including service delivery departments), the private sector and civil society rather than from within the narrow ICT/telecommunications specialist groups. A review by APC or another organisation of consultation processes in those countries where these occurred could be valuable in this context.

Governments could also review the composition of delegations to the second phase PrepComs and the Tunis Summit, to ensure these are more representative of the expertise required.

### **3.13 How can national policymaking be made more gender-inclusive?**

The WSIS final texts, in common with other international agreements, refer extensively to the importance of gender inclusiveness. National delegations to WSIS PrepComs and the Geneva Summit, however, included only between 15% and 27% women (PrepComs 1 and 3). The proportion of women in official African national delegations at the Summit itself was just under 20%, with some 15 delegates including no women. There is little evidence that national policymaking processes were any more inclusive of women.

Governments and other organisations should consider how to make their policymaking processes more open to women and to ensure that more women play a significant or strategic role within national delegations. They could also consider how to undertake more effective research into ways in which ICTs may increase or reduce women's disadvantage, and incorporate findings from this research into realistic proposals for the WSIS second phase.

### **3.14 How should the involvement of the private sector be promoted?**

The private sector played a limited part in the development of African approaches to WSIS – yet the private sector was accorded a key role by Summit participants and texts in the delivery of WSIS goals. Africa also has a large number of innovative ICT businesses ranging from large-scale telecommunications operators to local Internet cafes serving low-income communities. The expertise of these businesses within African environments would contribute greatly to improving understanding of the potential and limitations of ICTs on the continent.

The first phase WSIS process did little to attract private sector participation and few African governments sought to involve the private sector in their policy development for it. Governments and other organisations might consider how they could more effectively harness African private sector expertise in the WSIS process.

### **3.15 How should civil society organise and coordinate its input into the Summit?**

African civil society's response to the first phase of WSIS was, to a large extent, reactive rather than proactive. At a continental level, it mirrored the organisation of the Summit itself, and civil society participants regretted that limited resources and personnel made it difficult for them to set agendas or influence outcomes to a significant degree. Some successes were achieved, however, at the Bamako continental meeting – at least in terms of text – and civil society organisations benefited from the increased networking opportunities created by the Summit process itself and by the ICT4D Platform.

Organisations might review their experience in the first phase of WSIS, not least with reference to the questions above, and seek ways of improving coordination, prioritisation *etc.* in light of the limited resources that are likely still to be available during the second phase.

### **3.16 How should civil society monitor and evaluate the WSIS process as it takes place?**

It is more difficult now than it might have been to review the impact of African participation in the first phase of WSIS because no systematic monitoring and evaluation process took place during that phase.

Monitoring and evaluation are important for lessons that can be learnt both immediately and in the longer term. Monitoring enables more informed discussion by participants of where initiatives are being successful or unsuccessful and facilitates adjustment of strategies and priorities in order to maximize the outcomes that can be achieved during the current process. Evaluation allows a longer-term view to be taken which can improve the quality and value of similar future initiatives.

Organisations might review the monitoring and evaluation processes available for the second phase of WSIS. A proposal concerning this is set out in the Endnote to this paper, below.

#### **Endnote – Monitoring and evaluating African participation**

This paper can only review some aspects of African participation in the first phase of WSIS and point to some areas for consideration by African participants in the second phase. It is limited to a considerable degree by lack of information, monitoring and evaluation undertaken during the first WSIS phase itself.

This could be remedied during the second phase. WSIS presents a unique opportunity for African stakeholders to assess strengths and weaknesses in relation to international ICT decision-making and ICT4D initiatives because it involves all stakeholder groups, in all of the continent's countries and regions. An independent assessment of African participation undertaken during the process itself could both enhance the quality of African input into WSIS II, by feeding back into the process between now and November 2005, and help to establish more effective arrangements for multistakeholder engagement in policymaking at national, regional and continental levels for the future.

What might a monitoring and evaluation process of this kind entail? Depending on

resources available, it could include:

analysis of inputs to and activity at the second phase preparatory meetings, PrepComs and Summit itself, and to the task forces / working groups established to review the two deferred issues;  
interviews with and questionnaires addressed to delegates at these meetings;  
analysis of national policymaking and consultation processes in a number of case study countries (comparable to the case studies undertaken for the *Louder Voices* study);  
interviews with and questionnaires addressed to national stakeholders;  
analysis of specific issues during the second phase (e.g. of discussions on the Digital Solidarity Fund, a generic theme such as 'access' or 'empowerment' and a specific development sector such as health or rural development.

It might be useful to associate any assessment of this kind with a broader ICT4D monitoring and evaluation process such as the 'Real Access' methodology developed by bridges.org.

Any initiative along these lines would need to begin soon in order to capture processes from close to the start of the second WSIS phase.

David Souter  
11 July 2004

**ANNEX A:**

**FINAL DECLARATION OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

**Bamako, 28030 May 2002**

The Africa Regional Meeting Preparatory to the World Summit on the Information Society was held at the Palais des Congrès in Bamako, Republic of Mali from 28 to 30 May 2002. Participating in the Conference were representatives of 51 African countries, delegates from many other countries and people representing African and global organizations, the private sector and civil society.

Opening statements were made by His Excellency Mr Alpha Oumar Konare, President of the Republic of Mali and by His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal and current Chairman of ECOWAS.

A welcome statement from Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations was read on his behalf by Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane of ECA.

Opening statements were also made by

Mr. Yoshio Ustumi,	Secretary General of ITU
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali,	Secretary General of the Agence internationale de la francophonie
Mr. A W Khan,	Deputy Director General of UNESCO
Mr. Carlos Trojan,	Ambassador of the European Commission in Geneva
Mr. Gerard Dega,	CEO of Alcatel France
Mr. Noah Samara,	CEO of WorldSpace and
Mr. Amadou Top,	CEO of OSIRIS Anais Network, representing civil society organizations

Closing statement were also made by:

Mr. Walter Fust,	Director, Swiss Cooperation and Representative of GKP
Mr. G.O. Segond,	Special Ambassador of the World Summit
Mr. Ahmed Mahjoub	State Secretary, Special Representative of Tunisia

The Conference elected Mali as Chair, together with a bureau composed of five government officials representing five African states (Senegal, Tunisia, Cameroon, South Africa and Rwanda), three representatives of civil society, two representatives of the private sector and a General Rapporteur (ECA).

Following the opening ceremony, Head of delegations from African countries and regional institutions, including the African Development Bank (ADB) made official statements.

The following 14 preconference workshops and other activities were organised on 25, 26 and 27 May 2002:

Local initiatives  
NICI strategies,

African languages and internet  
Media and ICT forum  
Gender and ICTs  
Cultural diversity and knowledge ownership  
African NGO consultation  
Review and appraisal of ICT impact: Scan-ICT Project  
Private sector forum  
Free software: the stakes for Africa  
Law and the Web  
Local communities and ICTs  
Training of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for their participation in WSIS activities  
The National strategy of Mali

**The Africa Regional Conference** organised 4 workshops and a round table, namely:

What the Information Society brings to Africa;  
What Africa brings to the Information Society;  
What Africa wants to preserve in the Information Society;  
How Africa can benefit from the Information Society: Round Table on the digital divide;  
Round Table on Africa's image in the media.

The reports of these preconference activities, the four workshops and Round Table are attached and complement the present **Declaration**.

On the basis of the outcome of the workshops and plenary discussions, **the Africa Regional Conference** adopts the following Declaration:

We, participants in the Africa Regional Conference, representing African Governments, the private sector and civil society organizations meeting in Bamako, Republic of Mali from 28 to 30 May 2002 in the presence of many invited government representatives and observers from international, governmental and non governmental organizations, do solemnly affirm that:

The Global Information Society should address the interests of all nations, most particularly, the interests of the developing countries;

The creation of local content should be accorded high priority;

Communication, forming as it does the basis of individual and societal existence, should be managed in a manner that secures the fair, balanced and harmonious development of all the people of the world with particular attention to the needs and aspirations of the most disadvantaged in society and those of African people in particular;

All partners, public, private sector and civil society organizations, more specifically small and medium size enterprises, have a stake in the development of communications and should be fully involved in decision making at the local, national, regional and international levels;

As a matter of vital necessity, global and regional available resources should be pooled in order to extend the benefits of ICTs to all inhabitants of the world.

In this connection, the representatives of African governments, civil society and the private sector, having noted the potential of ICTs to be harnessed for African development, maintain that the following principles should guide all the thinking, which goes into articulating a common vision of the information society. These principles are of particular importance to the developing countries, especially the African countries.

All citizens should be provided with the means of using ICT networks as a public service;

Every citizen should be guaranteed freedom of expression and protected access to information in the worldwide public domain as part of their inalienable right to freely accessing the information constituting the heritage of man kind which is disseminated in all media including new multimedia systems;

Technology supply should be diversified through:

The removal of regulatory, political and financial obstacles to the development of communication facilities and tools so as to meet the specific needs of citizens in all circumstances;

The implementation of an operational plan of action geared to the cultural and linguistic specificities of all countries, in particular those in Africa;

The development of data bases on experiences concerning the introduction of new technologies that address the needs of rural areas and their capacity to pay;

The promotion of open source software packages that extend the life of investment and user training. Because they are provided free of charge, implementation of open source software programmes is done with minimum cost;

The use of voice and touch screen applications that enable a greater number of people to participate in the information society.

Investment and funding strategies should be pursued through assistance with content creation and democratisation of access with particular emphasis to women and the youth;

Multilingualism should be promoted and cultural diversity maintained as the driving force for the process of developing content for local and international use;

The full participation of the civil society and the private sector should be elicited at all levels of local, national, regional and international decision making related to the information society. These should be pursued by:

Forging new forms of partnership based on complementarities among the various categories of public, private sector and civil society stakeholders;

Establishing and/or strengthening at the local, national, regional and international levels, institutions that will create greater coherence and achieve better synergy in developing the information society.

Cooperation and collaboration should be enhanced through:

Networking on best practices and experiences as a way of building the type of

knowledge needed for the harmonious development of new technologies;

The development of applications and content suited to local needs;

The development of training plans that familiarise people with new technologies, their use and the legal framework of the information society;

The strengthening of decentralised cooperation as one way of leveraging the reduction of the digital divide;

The strengthening of networks that can increase individual participation in local, national, regional and international democracy.

Institutional, human and administrative capacity should be strengthened at the local, national, regional and international levels in order to achieve greater complementarities among all initiatives being taken to build the information society.

Democratic debate should be instituted on the new institutional and regulatory arrangements being made to define the social, cultural, economic, technical and ethical challenges posed by the new information and communication technologies.

All these principles and plans of action should be pursued within competent institutions so that the building of information society can be managed with the full participation of all the relevant stakeholders.

In this context, the **Africa Regional Conference** reiterates its full support for those global initiatives that have been adopted at the global as well as regional and continental levels.

It particularly requests the international community to give its full support to the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), the recommendations of the African Development Forum (ADF '99) and the ICT component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In this connection, the ICT programme of NEPAD should federate all the ICT initiatives of the continent and mobilize resources for funding of the major African projects.

It further requests that the various networks and foundations working to promote the use of new information and communication technologies and to narrow the digital divide, especially the Global Knowledge Partnership and the ANAIS network be given the support and resources they need.

**In view of the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, the Africa Regional Conference of Bamako has considered :**

**A. What the information society could bring to Africa:**

In that context, the Africa Regional Conference requests that:

Africa should benefit, in the framework of NEPAD from the immediate, massive and coordinated mobilisation of all the development partners to provide such financing as would guarantee public service, universal access and content creation that address the essential needs of the people of Africa;

The establishment before the second Prepcom meeting of the Geneva Summit of:

a training fund that would familiarise participants with all the issues concerning the development of the information society;

a "high level scientific committee" that will make recommendations to the second Prepcom meeting about the challenges facing the information society particularly when it comes to developing countries, especially those in Africa;

an information and advisory structure that would facilitate the participation of African civil society organisations and SMEs in the preparation of the World Summit;

a solidarity fund to secure the full and effective participation of African civil society organisations and SMEs in the preparatory process.

The study and promotion of relevant solutions adapted to the environment for ICTs, especially in the rural areas;

The development of solutions and the promotion of ICT initiatives to sustain local African creativity;

Establishment of public access points and the creation of an African backbone using innovative communication infrastructure;

A set of concrete proposals for ICT use in education and training in Africa should be developed for submission to the second Prepcom meeting;

The full and effective involvement of civil society and local stakeholders in developing new ICT applications should be secured;

Pilot studies should be promoted for replication at the local, national and regional levels with the view to securing access to new ICTs at affordable cost, particularly in the rural areas.

## **B. What Africa can contribute to the information society**

**In this connection, the Africa Regional Conference particularly requests that :**

- ?? The rich cultural diversity of Africa should be showcased and widely disseminated in cyberspace;
- ?? Support should be provided to the ICT activities of the African Language Academy;
- ?? A special fund should be set up for digitizing African archives and libraries which form the cultural heritage of the continent and can be part of Africa's contribution to the information society;
- ?? Among other things, African fora and seminars should be organised with the objective of collecting and showcasing local experiences for the benefit of all stakeholders;
- ?? Systematically, the specific features of Africa should be taken into account in international decision making.

## **C. Narrowing the digital divide**

**In this area, the Africa Regional Conference :**

- ?? Is of the opinion that narrowing the digital divide must go with the development of telecommunication infrastructure suited to the need of African people and citizens;
- ?? Welcomes the regional and global initiatives being taken to narrow the digital divide particularly from ECA, ATU, ITU, the G8, the UN ICT Task Force, UNDP, UNCTAD, the Francophony Agency, OECD, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations;
- ?? Invites the traditional partners of Africa to heighten the priority to narrowing the digital divide in their development policy, particularly with the European Union under the Cotonou Agreement;
- ?? Invites partners to study how best to optimize the cost of access to ICTs with the view to identifying the rules for organising the international connectivity market and the sharing of markets at the national level.

The Conference further requests that:

a) African States should:

- Contribute fully to the preparations for both phases of WSIS, namely Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005;
- adopt policies to stimulate the building of ICT infrastructure and providing universal access particularly in rural and remote areas through innovative and Africa-friendly solutions;
- fully involve African civil society organisations in the formulation of the operational strategy and implementation of the ICT component of NEPAD;
- remove duties levied on ICT hardware and software until the second phase of WSIS takes place in Tunis in 2005;
- formulate coherent national and regional policies and strategies for ICTs development (taking into account the multimedia convergence) which are likely to attract private national and international investments;
- adopt the "African charter" on radio broadcasting as a framework for the development of policies and legislations regarding information technologies and broadcasting in Africa;
- set up national committees bringing together the three components of the information society, namely the public sector, the private sector and civil society;
- actively involve the youth in national and regional ICT activities;
- ensure better gender balance in ICT use while instituting specific programmes that address the need of women particularly those aimed at rural and disenfranchised areas;
- recreate the "African news exchange";
- establish a multilateral African television network;
- invest in African media content as well as new technologies;

- develop independent production.
- b) The World Summits in Geneva and Tunis should, respectively:
- adopt in Geneva, in December 2003 a plan of action for developing infrastructure suited to the needs of people and citizens of developing countries, with particular attention to African and other least developed countries (LDCs);
  - adopt in Tunis, in 2005 any other additional plan of action for narrowing the digital gap that would address the needs of developing countries, particularly those in Africa;
- c) Bilateral and multilateral funding agencies should:
- pay particular attention to financing infrastructure facilities and content suited to the needs of the people and citizens;
  - pay particular attention to the involvement of the representatives of the civil society in all decisions relating to ICT development.
- d) Development partners:
- pay particular attention to human resources training and development, particularly teachers and students so as to promote content and infrastructure development with the view to facilitate the emergence of an African service industry based on ICTs;
  - contribute to the forging of innovative and constructive partnerships among donors, public authorities, the private sector and civil society in order to develop ICTs and content and build the infrastructure.
- e) Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should:
- actively and effectively promote and implement concrete projects in their respective areas of competence so that African people and citizens can fully benefit from ICTs;
  - in particular:
    - ?? ECA should continue to pursue the implementation of AISI in terms of the formulation and implementation of National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policies and strategies and the related sectoral plans;
    - ?? ITU should pay particular attention to Africa in the implementation of Istanbul declaration and plan of action on the digital divide by taking into account those priority areas set out in the Yaounde Declaration;
    - ?? UNESCO should mobilize all its national committees with the view to secure the participation of all stakeholders, especially civil society organisations, in the WSIS preparatory process by requesting them to submit proposals that will help the preparatory process along;
    - ?? UNITAR should mobilize its teams and partners to propose training plans in consult with local stakeholders (within the context of the international centre for training local stakeholders), associations, international organizations and academic institutions in the member

countries concerned;

?? The Executive Secretariat of WSIS should:

- take special care to secure the participation of African civil society in the preparation of the Summit by:
  - ?? keeping all African NGOs permanently informed in their working languages of progress made in the preparation of WSIS;
  - ?? securing the participation of civil society representative in all the national, regional or global events leading up to World Summit.
- make sure that the bureau of the **Africa Regional Conference** is able to monitor all the preparations leading to the Prepcom and the World Summit in close collaboration with the bureau of the PrepCom.

#### **D. Instituting new forms of cooperation**

As a way of narrowing the digital divide, participants in the Africa Regional Conference request that the local initiatives and experiences of local authorities in the more advanced countries should be shared with the local authorities of African countries. For that to happen, the Africa Regional Conference requests the competent bodies of local authority, particularly the World Federation of Local Authorities and the International Union of Local Authorities to commit all their members to developing decentralised forms of cooperation that will narrow the digital divide.

In this regard, the **Africa Regional Conference** welcomes the initiatives taken by the cities of Lyon, Geneva, Bamako and Tunis to promote e-governance locally and commends the Lyon initiative to organise the World Summit of Local Authorities on the Information Society to be held before the Geneva Summit in 2003. The Conference urges all bilateral and multilateral funding agencies and private corporations to give this initiative their full support.

Noting the personal commitment of H.E. Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, in promoting the harnessing of ICTs for development, the **Africa Regional Conference** requests President Konare to be so kind as to accept to preside over, as Africa's candidate, under the aegis of NEPAD, the preparatory activities leading to the Geneva Summit of 10-12 December 2003 and the Tunis Summit of the year 2005.

The **Africa Regional Conference** expresses its appreciation for the support extended by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and The Fondation du Devenir to make this Regional Conference a success. It would like to single out the Swiss authorities and the European Union Commission for their financial contribution which proved crucial for the organisation of this first Regional Conference in the WSIS preparatory process. Its appreciation goes to the Telecommunication Development Bureau of ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, UNITAR, the Agence internationale de la francophonie, the World Bank, the GKP, USAID, France, Sweden and the Republic and Canton of Geneva for their contribution.

Last but not least, the participants would like to express their appreciation to the Malian Authorities for convening this Regional Conference and the Secretariat of Bamako 2002 for organizing this event which has enabled all African States, civil society organisations and businesses to plug fully into the WSIS preparatory process (Geneva 2003, Tunis 2005).

**Bamako, 30 May 2002**

## ANNEX B: ATTENDANCE FIGURES AT WSIS EVENTS

Data in the table below and the attached spreadsheet, covering participation in official delegations at the three WSIS first phase PrepComs and the Geneva Summit session, were compiled from official participant lists by Barbara Fowlds. Some assumptions have been made where delegations have not given sufficiently clear information about delegate backgrounds.

Table B.1 – Attendance at the Bamako Africa Conference, May 2002

	registered
--	------------

Algeria	10
Angola	1
Benin	26
Botswana	3
Burkina Faso	33
Burundi	3
Cameroon	32
Cape Verde	2
Central African Rep.	4
Chad	13
Comores	5
Congo DRC	19
Congo Rep	10
Cote d'Ivoire	21
Djibouti	8
Egypt	2
Equatorial Guinea	1
Eritrea	1
Ethiopia	13
Gabon	9
Gambia	8
Ghana	11
Guinea	13
Guinea-Bissau	1
Kenya	11
Lesotho	2
Liberia	1
Libya	
Madagascar	2
Malawi	2
Mali	1095
Mauritania	10

Mauritius	2
Morocco	11
Mozambique	1
Namibia	3
Niger	12
Nigeria	22
Rwanda	7
Sao Tome & Principe	1
Senegal	77
Seychelles	
Sierra Leone	2
Somalia	
Somaliland	
South Africa	42
Sudan	6
Swaziland	
Tanzania	2
Togo	8
Tunisia	12
Uganda	5
Zambia	16
Zimbabwe	8
Non-African African Organisations	111 65
<u>Total</u>	<u>1785</u>