WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

Geneva December 2003

Tunis November 2005

2 Phase Summit

- Unique in UN experience
- Opportunity
  - to focus global attention on ICTs as a tool for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
  - To establish benchmarks, monitor and measure progress

Outline

1. Background, history
2. The development context of WSIS 2003
3. WSIS process
4. Towards Tunis – November 2005

1. Background – 70s & 80s: IT for development

- Bibliographic systems – capture info produced in developing countries – computers, microform – Medline, AGRIS
- Management information systems –improve public sector productivity – health systems
- Targeted at development policy, planning, administration and research

…90s - From IT to ICT

- Internet – communication – grass roots focus – empowerment
- ICT/development connection strengthened
- Increase in donor-funded ICT programs
- Integrated approaches: policy, infrastructure, human & institutional capacity, technology, applications/content

ICT Events

- ISAD 1996
- ADF 1999
- ECOSOC Special Session 2000
- UNICT Task Force
- WSIS

2. WSIS Geneva 2003

- The development context

The World Health Report – Chapter 1, Global Health: today's challenges

- For millions of children today, particularly in Africa, the biggest challenge is to survive until their fifth birthday, and their chances of doing so are less than they were a decade ago…Overall, 35% of Africa's children are at higher risk of death than they were 10 years ago. Every hour more than 500 African mothers lose a small child.

…sustainable development implies

- Explicit focus on poverty
- Local ownership of programs
- Involvement of all stakeholders – public, private sectors, civil society
- Anchored to Millennium Development Goals
- ICT as means not an end

Millennium Development Goals

- 8 goals – 18 targets
- Eradicate extreme poverty
- Promote gender equality
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Education, HIV/AIDS, environment, partnerships

Partnerships - ICTs

- Target 18:
  - in cooperation with private sector
  - make available benefits of new technologies
  - in particular information & communication technologies

two views of ICT & development

- ICT as an enabler of health, education, business development etc
  - MDGs 1 - 7
- ICT as a sector
  - MDG 8

…ongoing debate on how to define the information society

- Telcom, infrastructure – or content, media, culture
- Link to globalisation, market structures, ITU, WTO?
- Link to social development, WHO, Unesco?

3. WSIS process

- Political process with governments at core
- High stakes for private sector
- Strong civil society voices
- Multiple preparatory commissions
- Only last minute agreement by governments to declaration

Outcomes

- Declaration of principles – high level
- Plan of action
  - Inclusiveness – stakeholders
  - Infrastructure
  - Access
  - Capacity
  - Security
  - Applications – e-health etc

Civil Society

- Disappointed in results
  - Issued its own declaration
  - Focused on equity and rights
- But process brought civil society together
  - Across ideological, sectoral and geographic divides

Key civil society actors

- Communications Rights in the Information Society – CRIS – www.crisinfo.org

- Association for Progressive Communication – APC – www.apc.org

4. Towards Tunis

- Next phase issues
  - Internet governance
    - Security, privacy, SPAM
    - Leave as is or move to intergovernmental mechanism through UN
  - Digital Fund
    - Tax on Internet transactions to fund ICT development programs

Process

- Informal planning meeting March 2,3
- Discussion centred on 3 questions:
  - What are substance & issues to be dealt with in phase 2?
  - What are the expected results?
  - How should the process be structured?

Indicators of success?

- Effective participation of all stakeholders in process and agreement to declarations
- Joint support for future programs
- More reliable knowledge base to support priority setting, policies and plans

WSIS: an opportunity for information professionals?

- Support information sharing networks among projects and programs
- Help document project experiences through print and other media
- Compile lessons learned
- www.itu.int/wsis/