

WSIS Stocktaking: Proposed format and approach

Discussion paper

The first Preparatory Meeting (PrepCom-1) of the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Hammamet, 24-26 June 2004, has confirmed that one of the three areas of focus of the Tunis Phase will be “*Follow-up and implementation of the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action by stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, with particular attention to the challenges facing the Least Developed Countries*” (Document WSIS-II/PC-1/DOC/5). Specifically, this will involve undertaking a stocktaking of the implementation by governments, civil society, private sector and multilateral organisations. This stocktaking will be discussed at the PrepComs and presented at the Summit.

The concept of stocktaking is now a familiar one in the UN system, for instance as part of the so-called Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the Millennium Summit. ITU itself has already carried out a stocktaking of its WSIS-related activities (see: http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/Geneva2_04/Stocktaking-6June.doc). A stocktaking exercise provides an opportunity for coordinated follow-up and information-sharing. It is important, however, to recognise, that the stocktaking should not be interpreted as a substitute for implementation, but rather as a support to it.

The stocktaking for WSIS implementation presents particular challenges because of the multi-stakeholder nature of the process, and because the information society overlaps the mandates of several different UN organisations. Nevertheless, there is the potential for the stocktaking to make a major contribution to coordination and harmonisation of efforts in this area, and to reduce the potential duplication of work. WSIS should set the lead within the UN system in using ICT tools effectively in communicating its message.

Format

It is proposed that the Stocktaking would take several distinct but inter-related formats, in order to meet the needs of different audiences:

- A **formal printed document**, translated into the six official languages of the Summit, which would summarise the different inputs received from stakeholders and refer to the stocktaking website (see below). This document would comprise around 30-40 pages. In order to meet the PrepCom timetable, successive drafts would need to be issued in early January 2005 (for review by PrepCom-2) and in early August (for PrepCom-3).
- A **stocktaking website**, which would be an expanded version of the printed document, containing more detail and verbatim inputs from the different stakeholders, in their original language of submission, as well as links to projects and programmes. This would be regarded as a “living document” that is continuously updated, both during the preparatory process and after the Summit.
- A “**best practices and success stories**” website and booklet. In line with Para 28e of the Plan of Action (PoA), this should be “concise, accessible and compelling”, and should aim at popularising the WSIS implementation and gaining media attention.
- A “**performance evaluation and benchmarking**” exercise (PoA para 28), in particular focussing on efforts to achieve the ten WSIS targets. This exercise should include the development of a digital opportunity index, indicators to measure the digital divide and universal access, gender-specific indicators and comparability tools. The joint activity on ICT indicators to be undertaken by between ITU OECD, UNCTAD and others, which includes a proposed thematic meeting in February 2005, will contribute to this effort.

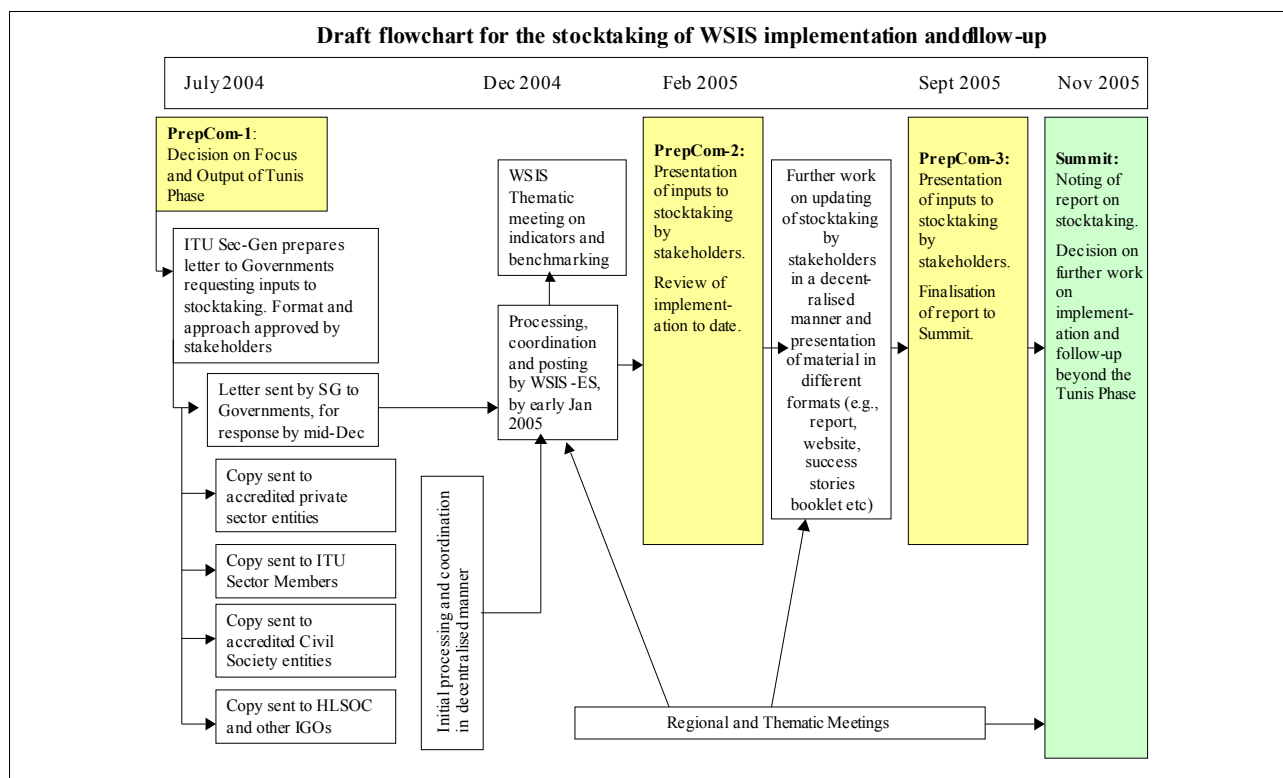
Approach

Although not the subject of a formal decision by PrepCom-1, several interventions (e.g., from Canada and EU) proposed that the stocktaking should be undertaken through the PrepCom process, with the assistance of the WSIS-ES and ITU, based on inputs from the different stakeholders. It is proposed that the approach for collecting and analysing inputs should be decentralised, with the secretariat playing a coordinating function under guidance from PrepCom (see flow-chart):

- **Governments:** The ITU Secretary-General, as secretary to the Summit, should send out a letter requesting inputs from governments in line with a format to be approved by the WSIS

stakeholders¹, with an initial deadline of mid-December 2004 (for the first report) and an update by end-June 2005 (for the second report). Contributions should be sent to the WSIS-ES (Bangladesh, Lithuania, Nigeria and Tanzania have already submitted inputs on the national implementation).

- **Civil Society:** The letter should also be sent to accredited civil society entities. The civil society Bureau should carry out a preliminary coordination of responses and deliver the results of the initial and updated survey to the WSIS-ES by end December 2004 and end July 2005 respectively.
- **Private Sector:** The letter should be sent to accredited private sector entities and ITU Sector Members. The CCBI would carry out a preliminary coordination of responses.
- **Multilateral organisations:** The letter would be sent to HLSOC members and other multilateral organisations participating in WSIS. ITU would carry out a preliminary coordination of responses.
- **Regional and thematic meetings:** Inputs would be received directly by the secretariat.



Co-operative approach

The approach proposed here is based on the presentation of material in multiple formats, with decentralised responsibility, and based on a multi-stakeholder partnership, with the WSIS-ES playing a supportive role. However, to ensure that the work is carried out effectively will require a number of different skills, including:

- Analytical skills, for digesting the material and preparing the inputs in different formats;
- Skills in benchmarking and analysis of indicators;
- Journalistic skills, for presenting the material in a manner that is concise, accessible and compelling;
- Administrative assistance, for processing the different inputs and managing the process of posting and translation.

It is proposed to use the mechanism of informal consultations with stakeholders, combined with co-operative online working and use of the WSIS-ES web resources, in order to capitalise on the skills available for this exercise among the stakeholders.

¹ HLSOC has already approved a format. It is proposed to convene a working group of stakeholders to approve a common format and then submit this for further comments, via the WSIS website. A first meeting of this group could take place on 31 August.