



Statement on the occasion of the WSIS Forum 2015, Geneva 25 - 29 May

Association for Progressive Communications, APC

My name is Aida Mahmutović. I come from Bosnia and Herzegovina where I work for the One World Platform for South and East Europe, a member of the Association for Progressive Communications. Today I speak on behalf of the APC.

As an international civil society network that has participated actively in the WSIS process since its inception, APC remains committed to the WSIS goal of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"; where everyone can create, access, use and share information to fully promote sustainable development and improve their quality of life.

Much still needs to be done to realise this goal. In our efforts to do so we urge all those involved, to keep the following in mind:

1. The centrality of development

Putting development at the centre of ICTs for development requires more than ensuring access to technology; it requires governments and other actors to invest in human development, build institutional capacity, secure human rights, and build democratic, transparent and accountable governance.

These processes go well beyond the narrow internet governance issues that have dominated the WSIS plus 10 review.

2. Affordable and public access

We recognise the valuable role that the ITU has played in the action line on access to infrastructure. Nevertheless, more needs to be done, particularly for people who are socially and economically marginalised. Public access such as through libraries and community information centres, especially in rural and remote areas must be on the agenda.

Effective affordable access is not just 'connecting the next billion'. It is about access that empowers people to create their own content, in their own languages, and to act to change their lives. It is not about linking more consumers to the internet.

Quick fix solutions such as zero-rated access to social networking platforms should be approached with great caution. They risk increasing access divides by creating different categories of users, with different levels of access.

3. Human rights

The WSIS's emphasis on human rights must be maintained. While the principle that human rights standards apply online has become universally accepted, it is not fully respected. Rights to freedom of expression and to privacy are being violated through mass surveillance and online censorship and encroachment of media freedom – as pointed out in UNESCO's internet study. Shutting down of mobile networks during protests prevent people from using ICTs to demand social justice. We need a renewed commitment by states to advance human rights: economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights.

4. Good governance

Citizen participation and transparent and accountable governance are critical to achieve the WSIS vision of people-centred development. APC would like to see greater emphasis on good governance at national, regional and global levels in the overall WSIS review and in the post-2015 development agenda.

5. Gender equality

The Geneva Declaration affirmed the empowerment of women and their full and equal participation in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. Renewed commitment is required by all stakeholders to achieve this goal, and to recognise and end technology-related violence against women.

Going forward APC would like to see a stronger Internet Governance Forum in line with the recommendations of the NETmundial and of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development's Working Group on IGF Improvements. We would like to see greater participation of governments in the IGF starting with a decision to renew the IGF for at least a further 10 years.

In closing, let us be reminded that the principle of multistakeholder participation was embraced at the WSIS. To be fully democratic and inclusive, multistakeholder participation needs to be affirmed and to evolve.

We urge the President of the General Assembly and the co-facilitators of the WSIS review to ensure an open, inclusive and transparent process with meaningful input from all stakeholders.

The goal of people-centred information societies, like the goal of social justice, can only be achieved through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholder groups - and in particular those who represent the interests of marginalised groups.

Thank you.