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**THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
OUTCOMES OF THE TUNIS PHASE
16-18 November 2005**

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
The Tunis Phase.....	1
Caribbean Perspectives in Tunis.....	3
Implementing the WSIS Plan of Action in the Caribbean.....	4
Financing ICT for Development Activities at the ECLAC/CDCC Secretariat	5
Retooling for the Information Society - From Documentation to Knowledge Management	6
Documents, Databases and a Documentary.....	6
Next Steps for ECLAC/CDCC	7

The World Summit on the Information Society Outcomes of the Tunis Phase 16-18 November 2005

Introduction

The second session of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) convened in Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005 with participants making a commitment to work towards:

"...a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations ... and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that people every where can create, access,, utilise and share information and knowledge, to achieve their full potential and to attain the internationally-agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals."

Tunis Commitment November 2005

This document will highlight some of the outcomes of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society focusing on issues that drew responses from the Caribbean delegations and suggest some appropriate follow-up activities on which the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean might collaborate.

The Tunis Phase

The Summit was the follow-up to the first WSIS session held in Geneva two years earlier and a major event for the host country, Tunisia. Governments, international organizations, and civil society representing a wide variety of interests were present at the November 2005 Summit, attendance at which was estimated at more than 20,000 people.

The Geneva session of the WSIS had focused on issues related to access and connectivity, the objective being to ensure that adequate infrastructure, a major prerequisite for achieving a successful transition to an Information Society, was in place in all countries. Coming out of the Geneva session was a *Declaration of Principles* and *Plan of Action*, which urged governments to, among other things:

- Develop their own e-strategies, including strategies for capacity building;
- Initiate dialogue on the issues at the national level involving all stakeholders;
- Engage in projects to develop the information society; and
- Promote public sector/private sector partnerships.

During the Preparatory process leading up to the second session of the WSIS a comprehensive stocktaking exercise was undertaken to assess progress in implementing the *Plan of Action*. The Tunis Phase of the WSIS endorsed both the *Plan of Action* and the *Declaration of Principles* and adopted two additional documents, The *Tunis Agenda* and the *Tunis Commitment*.

If the Geneva Phase could be said to have determined "what" was required to create a global information society, the Tunis phase focused on "how" and "why". While the Geneva Summit emphasized the removal of infrastructural barriers, Tunis was concerned with the removal of economic and social barriers to access, the Tunis Commitment noting, that the Summit was *"an important stepping stone in the world's efforts to eradicate poverty and to attain the internationally-agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals"*

The point was made frequently, that one ought not to be working towards information and communications strategies, but ICT-enabled development strategies which would boost literacy by extending access to quality education, enhance the capacity of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), improve governance and access to government information, and assist in disaster mitigation.

The Summit made a new commitment to the implementation of the Digital Solidarity Agenda, one of the practical measures aimed specifically at bridging the Digital Divide.

The Digital Solidarity Fund and the « Geneva Principle »

The Digital Solidarity Fund is sustained through the voluntary commitment of public authorities and/or private entities who decide to implement a new financing mechanism for development, named the « **Geneva Principle** » by H.E. Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal.

The Geneva Principle involves a 1% contribution on public ICT procurement contracts, paid by the vendor on his profit margin. Clearly stated in all ICT public call for bids, this obligation to contribute 1% of the transaction to the Fund is neither subject to interpretation nor negotiation, and thus does not cause distortion of market competition. The contribution awards the vendor a « digital solidarity » label.

Implementation of the « Geneva Principle »

As of 1st January 2005, the City of Geneva, founding member of the Digital Solidarity Fund, has endorsed the « Geneva Principle ». It therefore commits to include in all its calls for bids related to the procurement of information technologies, services or telecoms, a clause whereby the vendor who wins the bid must contribute 1% of the total amount of the transaction to the Digital Solidarity Fund, paid on his benefit margin.

The « Geneva Principle » must be considered as an additional condition for participating in public call for bids related to information technologies and telecommunications issued by the City of Geneva. Therefore, the DSI (Department of Information Systems of the City of Geneva) demands from the bidding vendors a [declaration of contribution to the Digital Solidarity Fund](#), to be submitted in addition to the documents requested for their participation in the call for bids.

In terms of regulations, the « Geneva Principle » enters into force following the **decision of the Administrative Council (Executive Council of the City of Geneva) of 15 December 2004** that sets the rules of its implementation within the municipal Administration.

DSF: 2005

Based on what has become known as the “*Geneva Principle*”, a Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) will be maintained from a 1% "tariff" included in public calls for bids related to information technologies and levied on ICT vendors. The major beneficiaries of the fund, which currently has 29 members, (many of them from Africa) will be the developing countries. The DSF was an initiative of the President of Senegal.

Far more contentious than the issue of finance was the discussion on Internet Governance, with several delegations expressing the view that the time had come to bring an end to the USA's monopoly in this regard and create a more democratic decision making structure for the management of the Internet. This issue remains unresolved. Further discussions on Internet Governance were deferred at the suggestion of the UN Secretary General and will be resumed at a consultation in Geneva in February 2006.

WSIS: UN to hold consultations on new Net governance body

IDG News Service 1/12/06
John Blau, IDG News Service, Düsseldorf Bureau

The United Nations will launch the first round of consultations next month on creating a new Internet governance body, as agreed by delegates attending the global Net summit in Tunis last year.

The U.N., which hosted the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in November, is welcoming all stakeholders to attend the consultations, which will take place in Geneva on Feb. 16-17, according to a statement published Jan. 11 by Swiss diplomat Markus Kummer, who had previously participated in the WSIS Working Group on Internet Governance.

Caribbean Perspectives in Tunis

Caribbean participants were few in number but vocal in raising issues of particular importance to Small Island Developing States and in making the link between information and communications technology and national development strategies. Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, Cuba and the Dominican Republic presented Caribbean perspectives during the plenary sessions. Excerpts from remarks by Caribbean delegations are reproduced below.

Technology issues are secondary to the human problems of organizational structure and business process change that will be necessary to maximize the effectiveness of our investment in technology". [Barbados]

There was strong support from the Caribbean delegations for the Digital Solidarity Fund.

"There are some issues, which threaten to perpetuate the gap between developed and developing countries. Critical among these issues is the matter of resources. Achievement of goals of the WSIS Plans and ICT development for all is dependent on the mobilization of considerable financial resources.

It is important therefore that we recommit to the Monterrey Consensus, and the sustainability of the Digital Solidarity Fund, which together will address inequities in the global economic system and enable the smaller economies to realize their full potential as part of the global community. In this context also, is the need to put ICTs at the service of small island states, states which like those in the Caribbean are prone to natural disasters, and also at the service of vulnerable individuals, communities and countries. We're committed also to protect and promote the cultural diversity of content in the Information Society". [Jamaica]

Caribbean delegations also strongly advocated a multilateral approach to the issue of Internet governance.

"In our view there cannot be domination by any one party in the development of guidelines for Internet Governance, in the international arena. Accordingly, we call for a spirit of multilateralism to be infused in all future deliberations on Internet Governance". [Trinidad and Tobago]

There were differing views regarding the role of ICTs in poverty reduction.

"The new information and communication technologies, far from becoming a means to move towards a fair world, and a more harmonic and equitable development, have contributed to deepen inequality and injustice, and have become an additional obstacle for the progress of poor countries." [Cuba]

The Dominican Government, aware that poverty and social inequality are not only the result of absence of revenues, but also, the absence of opportunities for developing the capacities and potential of our people, has initiated a series of programs where Information and Communications Technology plays a vital role, since it has demonstrated to be a tool for scientific, economic and social development of nations, saving time and bridging the distance from the rest of the world and universal knowledge. **[Dominican Republic]**

Presentations, made by the five Caribbean delegations, are available at the web site of the Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre <http://www.eclacpos.org/ict/>

Implementing the WSIS Plan of Action in the Caribbean

Following the Geneva session Caribbean governments implemented several of the important prerequisites identified in the Plan of Action and Information and Communications Technology became an important aspect of the policy dialogue within and among most Caribbean countries.

A Stocktaking exercise conducted by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in May 2005 located ICT strategies for Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the Bahamas, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In many of the member countries new institutional arrangements were put in place or existing institutions given new mandates to manage ICTs. Each CDCC member country has established a network of websites, through which increasingly sophisticated e-government services are now being offered.

New legislation was drafted and passed in many cases in respect of telecommunications, electronic transactions, and computer misuse.

The ICT Stocktaking report referred to above is available as a database on the website of this office (www.eclacpos.org) and summarised in ECLAC document LC/CAR/L.56 entitled "Information and Communications Technology in the Caribbean: stocktaking report" October 2005. The report was presented to the Expert Group Meeting convened in advance of the meeting of the monitoring Committee of the CDCC in May 2005. It shares some of the features of the benchmarking exercise undertaken by the ICT programme of the ECLAC Head Office, but does not obviate the necessity for a formal benchmarking exercise to be undertaken in the Caribbean since this is an essential first step for measuring not only progress, but impact as well.

It is relatively easy to identify milestones. It is more complicated, though no less necessary, to assess the impact of this investment in time, effort and resources. The Stocktaking exercise revealed significant investment in human and financial resources in pursuit of the gains promised by the Information Society. Without tools to measure impact of the investment so far, there is a real danger that resources, always scarce in developing countries such as ours, could be diverted to some new area of promise before results can be achieved. It is the danger of working towards an ICT strategy instead of an ICT-enabled development strategy, which will treat with ICTs as an input, with improved development indicators as a measurable output.

Another aspect that has received insufficient attention is the area of public awareness. Without wide ranging public involvement in and understanding of the objectives of the ICT strategy, the most important source of feedback, both positive and negative, is ignored.

Despite its limited resources, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean stands ready to work with countries in these and other areas.

Financing ICT for Development Activities at the ECLAC/CDCC Secretariat

At the twentieth Session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) the Secretariat presented a document entitled "Obstacles to the implementation of the Information Society in the Caribbean". Responding to this presentation the CDCC urged the Secretariat by way of Resolution 60(XX) to "continue to provide extra-budgetary support for important ECLAC activities in the Caribbean, among others: the project designed to implement the plan of action of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in the Caribbean, entitled: 'World Summit on the Information Society - supporting the transition'."

Requests for funding the project referred to above have not been successful. The project was re-drafted and submitted to the European Union under the Alliance for the Information Society (@LIS) programme. The response was a suggestion that the project be re-submitted as part of the CARICOM Information Society (CARIB-IS) project. This was done in August last year and revised following discussions with CARICOM. This office currently awaits a further response from the CARICOM Secretariat.

The activities identified under the revised project are:

- Benchmarking exercise
- Periodic stocktaking
- Technical assistance in the preparation of ICT enabled development strategies
- Preparation of comprehensive country profiles
- Preparation of technical notes on best practices in selected sectors
- Preparation of information packages for general distribution
- Creation of digital content

In the interim, the United Nations ICT Task Force has made available some resources which will be administered through the ECLAC Headquarters, for a consultant to be attached to this office for ten months to ensure that the Caribbean realise some benefit from work in ICT

capacity-building and Information Society indicators currently being done for Latin America. More recently additional funding was made available for the conduct of a capacity-building workshop on ICT policy for the benefit of participants from the Caribbean. A date and venue for this workshop has not yet been decided.

This office will continue to explore all available avenues in an effort to secure funding for these important activities.

Retooling for the Information Society - From Documentation to Knowledge Management

Despite its obvious constraints, the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean has not been idle. This office has always had an "information for development" programme as an important aspect of the information service provided to the region. Responding to the reform agenda of the United Nations and recognizing the need for a different type of service in the context of an information society, where information overload has become a serious issue, this office developed a knowledge management strategy and a culture of knowledge-sharing that has resulted in a number of communications and research efficiencies that have now become an integral part of the work flow.

The Caribbean Documentation Centre which has spearheaded information projects and services in this office has since November 2005, become the Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre, a change of name which has brought with it important new responsibilities. Working closely with the programme Unit as well as other substantive units in the office the goal of the Knowledge Management Centre is the elimination of duplication of the internal research effort, adding value by making some products available to the public via the web site.

These include: the already established Caribbean Digital Library, Development Profiles for each CDCC country (a work in progress) and ICT profiles (also a work in progress). Such success as has been achieved so far must be attributed to the work of the staff, cooperation from the IT personnel at ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago, and six months of technical assistance made available via the United Nations Fulbright Programme.

Documents, Databases and a Documentary

Following is a list of documents and other outputs of relevance to the Information Society prepared by the Subregional Headquarters during the 2004-2005 biennium:

- Caribbean Forum on the Information Society report. (October 2004)
- Expert Group Meeting on the Information Society report (May 2005)
- Youth employment and ICT: a challenge and an opportunity (2004)
- Information Literacy in the Caribbean (2005)
- Measuring the information society in the Caribbean (2005)
- Documentary: "ICT in the Caribbean" available on DVD (2005)

Next Steps for ECLAC/CDCC

In planning its follow-up to the WSIS, the Secretariat will go forward in a spirit of collaboration within the organisation and with the Member States, recognizing that:

- Investments in information and communications technologies as important strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals
- An isolated 'ICT Strategy' will have only limited usefulness. The ICT enabled development strategy must be approached from a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary perspective achieving synergies within the work programme and building on its strengths in content creation.
- In the current climate of scarce human and financial resources, this office can ill afford to spend time and resources on questions for which the answers are already known. Future interventions must add value
- The focus must be on building capacity, sharing best practices, measuring not only progress; but also economic and social impact, and raising awareness of the issues.