

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

INTRODUCTION

On Dec 5 + 6 OFCOM, in close cooperation with ITU, invited almost 70 people to a workshop in Coppet, Switzerland to begin brainstorming on the World Summit on the Information Society (**WSIS**). Switzerland and Tunisia are co-hosting the Summit. Phase One will take place in Geneva in December 2003 and Phase Two in Tunis in 2005.

The broad goals of the workshop were to:

1. Clearly define/articulate World Summit objectives and deliverables.
2. Recommend Topics/Themes and Key Players for the Summit.
3. Recommend practical lead up preparation for the Summit.
4. Draft Workshop 'Recommendations'.

This was an informal session, with no fixed agenda. Everyone was encouraged to speak openly during the entire exercise.

The following report aims to synthesize both the main issues discussed during the workshop and suggestions made later by various participants. It is not exhaustive and, as this was an unofficial meeting, recommendations will be considered but are not binding.

THE COPPET WORKSHOP

Summit participation was the most contentious issue¹. What exactly will it be? What role will different participants have? Discussions at the workshop highlighted the difficulty of satisfying the varying expectations of governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, the media and other non-governmental organizations.

WSIS - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The Summit's primary goal is a political process leading to a Declaration of Principles, and in turn to a results-based Plan of Action. These principles need to be identified, negotiated and agreed upon (at least broadly) in the lead up to Phase One of the Summit.

To have a global impact the Summit must attract Heads of State from the major developed and developing nations as well as key national, regional and international stakeholders. Just who has a voice in this process is crucial. WSIS is unique because it aims to be a high level global and multi-stakeholder gathering. It intends to provide an environment of discussion where states, international organizations, the private sector and civil society are on an equal footing. This opens new possibilities of partnership, for both process and results.

WHAT IS WSIS SUPPOSED TO ACHIEVE?

- WSIS should have a policy focus. Proposals should be for result-oriented, concrete measures and solutions.

¹ On 21 December 2001, the 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted Resolution A/RES/56/183 which encourages participation of all stakeholders in the Summit preparatory process and in the Summit itself

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

- Government commitments to reach specific infrastructure targets within defined time frames could also stimulate Private Sector investment.

WSIS could aim to:

- 1. Create a global understanding of the Information Society (IS) and its benefits.**
 - a) Use case studies to get the message across – especially to ‘non-believers’ (governments and individuals).
 - b) The real goal is to move towards a knowledge-based society, and to examine the relationship between access to information and education, labor conditions & the work place, political & social infrastructures (for example tax and welfare systems), etc.
- 2. Help Bridge the Digital Divide.**
 - a) Adopt and look at how to implement the goals of the UN Millennium Declaration on universal access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and their use for development and poverty eradication. Determine how best to assist countries to set priorities in their use of ICT in, for example, education and health.
 - b) Find the best method to add value to existing initiatives and avoid duplications.
 - i) Help identify opportunities for coordination and cooperation.
 - ii) Create a ‘Best practice’ market place.
 - c) Create new partnerships for action programs.
 - d) Establish a link between ICT and sustainable development.
- 3. Governance (Policy Framework) - who’s in charge?**
 - a) Clarify and better define the various multi-stakeholder processes in rule making.
 - b) Lay out a road map of current worldwide initiatives, forums and best practices for future developments in IS and ICT.
- 4. Recognize and celebrate ICT pioneers and their achievements.**
- 5. Infrastructure.**
 - a) Identify the basic infrastructure of the Information Society that most effectively supports global society.
 - b) Develop networks that allow users to decide how to use them.

THEMES / SUBSTANCE

It will be necessary to identify which specific themes best fit into the overall Summit strategy and how the different participants could address them.

It may be useful to develop theme or issue ‘baskets’. For example:

- 1. Infrastructure – connectivity, access, alternative platforms, etc.**
 - a) The (technical) way the global and local network infrastructures are laid out will have a profound and lasting impact on the shape of the information society.
 - b) Today's telecommunications infrastructures, for various reasons, have the digital divide built within them. (E.g. not enough addresses for most Asian or African countries. Other networks are either very costly or inherently asymmetric.)

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

2. Applications – including education, health care, content creation, security, etc.

- How are ICT relevant to national strategies/objectives: health, education, economy, etc.? What projects are needed for long-term sustainability?

3. Governance and Policy

- a) Who makes the rules?
- b) Do we have adequate international/regional structures for rule making?
- c) Internet governance issues.
 - i) Old laws and new technologies.
 - ii) New laws outpaced by newer technologies.

4. Security

- a) Risks and threats.
 - i) Cyber crime, terrorism.
 - ii) Integrity of the Internet.
- b) Old laws can't keep up with new technologies.

5. Globalization/Localization (e.g. local applications, language, talent)

- a) How does globalization create more opportunities for localization?
- b) How does localization become accountable to globalization?
- c) Globalization of media culture: need to preserve local and national identity and content. (Linked to the issue of languages and access to IS.)
- d) Need to promote local talent, solutions, content, language, etc.

6. Digital Divide

- a) Very little attention is paid to the connection between ICT and basic human needs.
- b) Bridging the digital divide = bridging divides in education, incomes, employment, institutions, infrastructure, etc. within and between countries.

THE MAIN ISSUES

1. Participation

If WSIS succeeds in opening the Summit process in a meaningful way this will, in itself, be seen as a measure of success.

- a) Expectations

Non-government participants appear to share the belief they should be equal partners in all aspects of the Summit, including contributing to the processes leading to declarations or action plans.
- b) Challenges
 - i) Finding a mechanism to satisfy Government and non-government participants.
 - ii) Keeping the process open enough to avoid people taking to the streets to protest yet another meeting behind closed doors where decisions are being made without including them, the primary stakeholders.
- c) Solutions
 - i) A Networked Summit – See 2 below.
 - ii) Use the PREPCOM process immediately to begin opening participation.

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

- iii) Use the Internet to create a broad constituency (See 'Buy In', 5, below).
 - iv) Make governments understand the pitfalls and the potential.
 - v) Giving civil society as big a role as possible will help to counter cynicism and fears it doesn't have a voice when decisions are being taken for it.
- d) Payoff
- i) The first real **World** Summit of its kind – accolades for the UN, ITU, and Host countries.
 - ii) Full participation is the only way to assess progress and solutions.
 - iii) A real opportunity for Heads of State, the Private Sector, NGOs and Civil Society, Pioneers, etc (the global community) to get on the same network.
 - iv) Terrific Media coverage.

2. A Networked Summit

It's time for a change. Many workshop participants stressed the importance of adopting a new summit format. They believe that to succeed WSIS must be, and must be seen as, more and different than a 'typical' UN political summit.

- a) Keeping Expectations Realistic
- i) Non-government participants need to understand that they are not the people who ultimately legislate or sign treaties.
- b) Challenges
- i) Changing the status quo and convincing people to be pioneers is never easy.
 - ii) Communicating the benefits to Governments in general.
 - iii) Some governments fear 'activists' and won't want to give them a voice.
 - iv) It will take much more work than a 'traditional' Summit.
 - v) It will cost more.
- c) Solutions
- i) Being able to identify those who do take part as pioneers with the courage of their vision.
 - ii) Explain the potential gains to politicians:
 - (1) Major opportunities for very positive media coverage.
 - (2) Opportunities to build new constituencies.
 - (3) Opportunities to showcase success stories and attract positive attention from potential donors, investors.
 - iii) Find civil society participants who want dialogue. Give all sides the opportunity to network behind the scenes.
 - iv) Outsource and take advantage of pool of 'interested' experts.
 - v) Sponsorship – corporations like being identified with success too!
- d) Payoff
- i) a unique opportunity:
 - (1) to break away from the past,
 - (2) for real dialogue,
 - (3) **and to take credit for it.**

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

A NETWORKED SUMMIT – THE COPPET DIAGRAM

Suggestions, comments and alterations to the original proposal are in Italics.

1. Governance issues

Not simply to seek consensus but to discuss and resolve differences. This should lead to a shared, global vision, a global deal.

2. (Political) Summit

This is where government leaders will meet. The importance of the Summit is to get them to commit to an agreed goal that will be declared here. It is important that it is separate. This platform will also provide a promotional role for government leaders.

This does not 'ring fence' the original governmental meeting but gives Heads of State their due in the center. In so doing, it makes some very active spaces where there should be good cross-fertilization. At the same time it offers Heads of State the opportunity of very attractive media opportunities.

3. Market Place

Should be organized with *investors*, NGOs, providers, donors and business to promote access to investment and infrastructure. Come up with new ideas, projects, deals, mechanisms, and guarantee forms. Provide a service so that the LCD's have easier access. The concept needs to be developed there. *(Possible connection to the Political Summit so that government could announce infrastructure goals that would stimulate investment.)*

4. Connectivity

To focus on developing the necessary infrastructure for the Information Society, achieving universal access and spreading the benefits of new technologies.

5. Thoughts for the Future

An open forum (theoretical, technical, economic, etc.) with no pre-determined agenda, a stage for whatever happens. It should also provide a crystal ball into future trends and needs. Organized by academia.

This should also recognize the contributions made by ICT pioneers.

6. Issues for Society

Who organizes the issues - Multi players, NGOs? Outcome: provision for cultural diversity and content building

7. Youth

8. Women

9. Media

Organized by own 'trade' association *and others*. Media is there for the outreach function. Use them for the last mile dissemination. Information from the Internet could be transcribed / transmitted to rural areas in local language.

The ICC suggests scheduling the events sequentially so all can participate. Sam Pitroda goes a step further saying the Events should be spread out over all of 2003 with special emphasis on World Telecom day – May 17th and including seminars on: What is the Information Society; Digital Divide; Conferences on NGOs; Youth; Women; Forums for Private Sector and Investors. (See appendices)

A Networked Summit would attract the public but it is important that the process should begin now with PREPCOM. There should also be interaction between the different platforms. At same time, it is clear that all key players want to be involved in the process regarding the 'Political Summit'. The 'Networked Summit' should not be perceived as a way to push the other actors out of the game.

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

3. WSIS Preparatory Process

- a) What needs to be done
 - i) Determine PREPCOM participation.
 - ii) Draw up guideline for National Reports.
 - iii) Draw up guidelines for National participation.
 - (1) How to attract heads of state?
 - (2) How to ensure that WSIS is not restricted to technical/telecommunications issues?
 - (3) Guidelines for countries to demonstrate involvement of citizens, civil society, the private sector, etc.
 - iv) Identify existing ICT initiatives and encourage their participation (see 6 below).
 - v) Determine how best to get the Media involved.
- b) Obstacles
 - i) Time.
 - ii) Money.
 - iii) Political jockeying.
- c) Solutions
 - i) Working group(s), outsourcing.
 - ii) Identify good partners in each country.
 - iii) Sponsorship of specific processes.
 - iv) Emphasize policy aspect of Summit.
 - v) Transparency (discourages sabotage).

4. Funding

- a) Requirements
 - Need to determine required budget (2003 + 2005).
- b) Sources
 - i) National governments.
 - ii) International organizations (UN, World Bank, etc.).
 - iii) Foundations.
 - iv) Private Sector.
- c) Expectations– what do they want out of it (see 'Buy In' 5 below)?
- d) Identify what WSIS can deliver.
 - Ensuring good Media coverage is key.

5. Buy In – Selling WSIS to key stakeholders and the broad public

- a) Face time – the quickest and most efficient way to reach key stakeholders (and sponsors), go directly to them and ask:
 - i) What's in it for you?
 - ii) What do you want to get out of it?
 - iii) What do we have to do to make it worthwhile for you to be there?

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

- b) Online – the cheapest, most effective way to get global involvement, to hear a wide variety of voices and to democratize the entire Summit. This is essential to open the preparatory process. Print and broadcast media (radio + television) can also help.

6. WSIS and Existing Initiatives

- a) Goals
 - i) Create a roadmap of what's already out there.
 - ii) Find the best way to add value.
 - iii) Encourage cooperation and coordination.
- b) Obstacles
 - i) Turf battles.
 - ii) Conference/Summit fatigue.
- c) Solutions
 - i) Encourage all players to see the benefit of cooperation and coordination.
 - ii) Let them chart the course.

7. The Media

- This may be the first time the media are not observers, but actors. They are creators and disseminators of content. They play an immense role, providing most of the content of the Internet, and should be active Summit participants from the start.
- It is also really important to 'keep an eye on the prize' by understanding what the media are interested in. What they will want to hear? What stories will they want to report? What 'product' should be presented at the end of the Summit?
- Media savvy is essential and the Media should be involved in the Summit process as soon as possible.
- The media can create broad interest and involvement in the Summit as well as encouraging support and sponsorship opportunities.

Coverage

1. Possibility of creating a World Summit Report that would encourage all participating countries to submit short reports on local case studies.
2. Create online Media opportunities to promote the use of ICT. For example, give developing countries (with no or limited access to telecommunications) the opportunity to set up live Internet access for their kids. The event could be covered locally and internationally. This encourages governments to do more. It's also a great human-interest story internationally and could attract investment interest.
3. The Media can be a forceful tool to encourage the 'new' Summit approach.
4. Active media participation can help make Summit events more interesting, interactive, engaging and entertaining.

WSIS – Coppet Workshop Report

Hilary Bowker (Workshop Moderator)

January 2002

CONCLUSIONS

1. It is essential to recognize the different and conflicting views of various sectors and to establish a clear determination and common understanding of what the Summit is about. This should be key in determining the Summit's overall direction and deciding what the best formula will be. The main goal is a shared political commitment that results in specific actions but it is still necessary to identify what these should be.
2. Finding a common definition of the Information Society should be a primary goal at the outset.
3. All key stakeholders, and particularly governments, need to be made aware of the expectations of the others.
4. It is essential to begin mobilizing input, ideas, processes and constituents. Forming a small working/advisory group to spearhead this effort could support both the substantive and process-oriented agendas as a strategic complement to the executive secretariat.
5. It's time to get the media on board. Media representation and participation should be broad and not restricted to any one group (i.e. trade union, private sector, etc.).
6. Transparency will be essential in Summit preparations and negotiations.
7. Careful forethought and contingency planning can help to prevent potentially divisive issues from derailing the Summit.