

Toward Tunis: Suggested Next Steps

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The Geneva Summit was a successful showcase for an immense number of local and national programs that have been developed for e-education, e-government, e-health, etc. It can also be characterized a "success" because the declaratory statement and action plan were finalized, despite the cost of physical meetings and disappointing lack of use of information and communication technologies to prepare these documents.

To ensure the next WSIS in Tunis in 2005 is a success, the following five items are suggested as important next steps:

1. *Determine how to finance the Solidarity Fund.*
The World Bank, regional banks, and a large number from the global ICT private sector could determine funding options for the Solidarity Fund based on a detailed "wish list" that outlines the funds needed for a select number of national, regional, and global initiatives to be achieved by the next WSIS.
2. *Immediately coalesce the private sector and build tangible and practical partnerships.*
The ICT private sector could be more actively engaged, not only for funding but by identifying exactly how it can participate in a few select initiatives deemed by the Secretary General to be of global and urgent need. A core group of individuals with experience in forging partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, and the United Nations could be given the opportunity to create and implement a plan that would immediately engage the global ICT private sector.
3. *Identify three to five urgent initiatives to be achieved by 2005.* An unprecedented opportunity was missed to launch fully-funded and organized initiatives that are global/regional in nature. At the next Summit, the Secretary General could launch initiatives that are already funded, organized, and proven as operational that address urgent and globally important issues, such as teaching girls to use the Internet, creating a global online business registration system, developing a free e-mail

system for children in Africa and the Middle East, providing comprehensive e-governance training and e-commerce training, launching an online global environmental monitoring system, or creating a global donor funds tracking system. These are but a few urgent issues that need immediate attention. If the Secretary General soon identified his priority initiatives, he could issue a challenge to all WSIS participants, encouraging groups to coalesce behind his priorities and determine exactly how an initiative will be organized, funded, and launched a few months prior to WSIS.

4. *Convene a group of ICT experts to determine how to put more "e" in the UN.* A shared vision needs to be created on how to more efficiently and cost effectively use ICTs to address e-commerce, e-trade, e-government, e-health, e-education, and e-culture, using ICTs to respond to food distribution crises, refugee crises, and the AIDS epidemic; how to use the Internet for information dissemination; and how to apply technology for greater efficiency and transparency within the UN system. Working through a representative group of individuals with expertise in ICT could identify innovative ways to realize global initiatives in these important areas.
5. *Survey all WSIS participants.* A survey of all WSIS participants could be conducted to receive their feedback and ideas on ways to better structure the Summit, how to use ICT more innovatively to prepare for the next Summit, and suggest specific global/regional initiatives that need to be achieved prior to the next Summit. In sum, to put ACTION in the plan adopted at the Geneva Summit.

It is in the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and great hope that these recommendations are submitted.

Let us all join hands to determine how to use information and communication technologies for greater peace, prosperity, individual growth, and economic development. ■

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