

“Mapping the WSIS+10 Review Process”

Research report on the 10-year review process of the World Summit on the Information Society *

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1. Introduction

In 2005, the final document of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) requested the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS objectives in 2015.¹ But nine years later, the subject of this review turned out to be more controversial than all the stakeholders involved in global communication governance could have expected: The United Nations (UN) and its member states have yet to reach any consensus on the exact modalities of the review and the way in which new WSIS objectives should be elaborated.

Instead of agreeing on an all-embracing event in 2015, which would be preceded by a coordinated preparatory process and eventually lead into a sustainable post-2015 framework, UNGA postponed all concrete decisions about the overall review process until its 69th session to take place in autumn 2014. Due to this lack of action, the two major UN agencies involved in the WSIS took up the initiative and pressed ahead with their own review activities: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) organised a first WSIS+10 review meeting in February 2013, while the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) initiated in 2013 a one-year open consultation process that led up to a WSIS+10 High Level Event in June 2014.² In the meantime, one of the most contested issues of the summit — the question of stakeholders' participation and their respective roles within Internet Governance — has been debated within an ad-hoc Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (WGEC).

Albeit these events and consultation processes are in many ways interlinked, discuss similar questions and share the same community of participants, there is a lack of coordinated or centralized communication about their interrelation and the different possibilities for stakeholders to contribute. As a consequence, and despite the fact that all processes reaffirm the importance of multistakeholder participation and open dialogue, many participants from civil society claim that the uncertainty about modalities and possible events still to come makes it difficult to engage meaningfully in the existing review activities.³

With the idea to provide a much needed overview of the various activities and the ecology of actors involved in the follow-up of the WSIS, the 'Mapping WSIS+10' project undertook a mapping exercise that aimed at, firstly, showing the political, thematic and chronological interrelation of the various review streams and, secondly, developing a

¹ Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev.1)-E, 18 November 2005, para. 111.

² The 10-year review process of the WSIS is commonly referred to as 'WSIS+10', an abbreviation used throughout this report.

³ For example, Samantha Dickinson, "What's Going on with WSIS+10? Part 1: Some Context," Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, (June 6, 2014), <http://linguasynaptica.com/whats-with-wsis-1/>.

more nuanced understanding of the various stakeholder groups and their concrete contributions. For this purpose, it created a dedicated section about WSIS+10 on the mapping platform provided by the Global Media Policy (GMP) Working Group of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR).⁴ The section lists all relevant events, actors and policy documents and shows their interrelation thanks to various visualisation options.

This report provides a summary of the research results that have been achieved so far. It starts with an introduction of the theoretical and methodological embedding and the limitations of the current mapping exercise before giving a short overview on the WSIS, its follow-up process and the difficulties encountered during the 10-year review. It then outlines the three major processes that are currently dominating WSIS+10 and their interrelations. Lastly, it proposes some prospects for further research on the topic.

2. Framework and setup of the research

Theoretical framing

Over the last decades the study of global communication governance has attracted large interest by media and communication scholars.⁵ While the transformation in the media sector led many scholars to reflect about the regulation of media and communication on the national and regional levels, the WSIS and subsequent international debates on communication and Internet policies were followed by a large amount of research about the changing nature of international policy-making. In this context many scholars sought to analyse changes in global communication governance by viewing them in their historical context and describing parallels with earlier international debates about media and communication.⁶ Others addressed the shifting realities by reflecting on the theoretical and methodological implications of studying global media policies and the complex ecology of actors intervening in their formulation.⁷

⁴ The Mapping Global Media Policy projects aims to monitor and analyse key issues and significant developments in the governance of media, information and communication on a global level. Its mapping platform is hosted and supported by an academic consortium led by Media@McGill, a research and public outreach hub based at McGill University; it is available at <http://www.globalmediapolicy.net>.

⁵ Among others: Sean O'Siochru and Bruce Girard, *Global Media Governance: A Beginner's Guide: A Beginner's Guide*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Manuel Puppis and Natascha Just, *Trends in Communication Policy Research: New Theories, Methods and Subjects* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012).

⁶ See for example: Divina Frau-Meigs et al., eds., *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics - Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012); Robin Mansell and Kaarle Nordenstreng, "Great Media and Communication Debates: WSIS and the MacBride Report," *Information Technologies & International Development* 3, no. 4 (2006): 15–36; Guillermo Mastrini and Diego de Charras, "Twenty Years Mean Nothing," *Global Media and Communication* 1, no. 3 (2005): 273–88.

⁷ For example: Manuel Puppis, "Media Governance: A New Concept for the Analysis of Media Policy and Regulation," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3, no. 2 (2010): 134–49; Marc Raboy and Claudia Padovani,

The “Mapping WSIS+10” project follows both these streams of research as it seeks, firstly, to understand the events and actors involved in the review of the WSIS by viewing them in the larger context of global communication governance and, secondly, to assess the process, its challenges and drawbacks by taking into account continuities (and discontinuities) from the WSIS and its preparation process. In addition, it draws on the analytical and methodological reflections underlying the Global Media Policy Mapping project.⁸ More concretely, it employs the conceptualizations, definitions and terminology developed in its framework and, on a more practical level, uses the mapping platform set up by the GMP project for the collection of data and their visualization.⁹

*Analysing policy as a process*¹⁰

In addition to its embedding in the study of global communication governance, the research project is based on the perception of policy as a process. Instead of analysing policies in terms of input, output and their causal relations, this approach moves away from the established teleological perspective of policy analysis. What interests most is not the outcome of policy-making but the policy-making processes themselves.¹¹ It therefore aims at understanding policy outcomes by analysing the processes of deliberation and decision-making and the (power) relations of involved actors within these processes. By doing this, the approach takes two dimensions of policy-making into account: On the one hand, it considers its performative dimension which comprises the concrete settings of decision-making and the practices through which multiple policy actors aim at securing their roles within the policy processes. On the other hand, the assessment focuses on the discursive dimension, namely, the ideas and arguments expressed in debates and consultations at various phases of policy-making.¹² Conducting policy analysis by looking

“Mapping Global Media Policy: Concepts, Frameworks, Methods,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3, no. 2 (2010): 150–69.

⁸ For more details about the project see <http://iamcr.org/s-wg/mcpl/gmp>.

⁹ A glossary explaining the key terminology of the project and the online platform is available on the platform itself: <http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/node/171>.

¹⁰ The theoretical and methodological reflections are part of a forthcoming PhD thesis by the author, which analyses UNESCO’s policy-making regarding digital information before the WSIS. For a detailed theoretical discussion of policy-making as a process, see Julia Pohle, “Opening the Black Box of Communication Policy-Making: Analysing Policy Change through the Lenses of Networks and Discourse” (presented at the IAMCR conference 2013, Dublin, 2013).

¹¹ The idea of perceiving policy as a process is, in particular but not exclusively, based on the approach of ‘Argumentative Policy Analysis’ developed by the two American political analysts, Fischer and Forester. See Frank Fischer and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993); Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis, eds., *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).

¹² The two dimensions of policy-making are, most prominently, considered in the work of Marteen Hajer who further developed Fischer’s and Forester’s reflections into a discourse analysis-inspired research agenda. See Maarten Hajer, “Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making,” *European Political Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 61–65; Maarten Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar, eds., *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

only at final policy texts cannot be sufficient to assess how ideas and practices influence the concrete outcome of policy processes. In order to understand the “plurality of processes, formal and informal, where actors, with different degrees of power and autonomy, intervene”¹³, the often chaotic and irrational internal workings of the ‘black box’ of policy-making need to be unravelled.

Following this approach, the research presented in this report focused mainly on the performative dimension and only to a smaller extent on the discursive dimension. More concretely, each review stream was assessed in terms of (1) its institutional and organisational setting, (2) the actors present (or absent) from each process and their contributions and (3) the major issues discussed and controversies encountered. It does not, however, include analysing the concrete content of contributions and discussions, as this would have gone beyond the narrow scope and the time constraints of the mapping project.

Research setup and objectives

Based on this theoretical framework, the project consisted of two separate research steps, each defined by two research objectives:

I. Step: Data collection

Objective 1: Mapping the various processes taking place in the context of the WSIS+10 review process

Through desk research and interviews with selected representatives of civil society, all decision-making processes about the modalities of the WSIS+10 review as well as all events organised in its framework were mapped within the platform provided by the GMP project.¹⁴

Objective 2: Mapping the institutional and individual actors involved in the processes and their contributions

In a second step, profiles for all institutions and individual actors involved in each review activity were created on the mapping platform and categorized according to their roles and characteristics.¹⁵ For feasibility reasons, the mapping of concrete input remained limited to contributions (workshops, reports, statements, submissions etc.) by actors

¹³ Raboy and Padovani, “Mapping Global Media Policy,” 151.

¹⁴ The desk research included the screening of websites, conversations on mailing lists, blog entries, document databases (UN, ITU and UNESCO) and policy proposals. In addition, a small number of official and unofficial interviews was conducted, either face-to-face in Paris or over the phone. Except for one interviewee, all respondents represented civil society, thus being able to give personal and often critical accounts about the debates, controversies and possibilities for intervention by non-governmental stakeholders.

¹⁵ As a result, a full thematic section was created on the GMP mapping platform containing three distinct policy processes and, in total, more than 180 new and updated profiles. The thematic section and all profiles are accessible here: <http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/node/10256>.

belonging to the broad category of civil society.

II. Step: Data analysis

Objective 3: Analysing processes, actors, contributions

Based on the collected data and visualization tools provided by the GMP platform, the three major review streams were assessed in terms of their processes, actors involved and their contributions as well as the major issues discussed.¹⁶

Objective 4: Assessing the interrelation and difficulties of the overall review

In a last step, the interrelation of the three major review processes was analysed in order to identify existing links on a personal, institutional and content-related level, to highlight the difficulties encountered by all three processes and to understand their common origins.

In addition to the empirical research goals, the mapping project followed two application objectives: First of all, by assessing the possibilities for civil society stakeholders to participate in the various WSIS+10 review activities, it aimed at contributing to the overall effort of IAMCR to increase the participation of academia in the review process. In addition, the thematic section on the GMP platform was created as a resource that should and will continue to be completed in the future. Thus, it should serve as a basis for further qualitative analysis, as for example, in the analysis of the concrete influence by civil society actors in the development of a post-2015 framework.¹⁷

Limitations of the research

In order to emphasize the focus on the 10-year review process of the WSIS, the mapping remained limited to the actual WSIS+10 activities which started in May 2011 and are still ongoing. Consequently, it does not take into account the WSIS follow-up events that were organised on an annual basis since 2006 (WSIS Forum).

In addition, the research deliberately did not consider the multiple events currently taking place in the context of global Internet Governance. This is not because we consider the current debates around Internet Governance and the WSIS review process as two separate realms. Quite the contrary, Internet Governance was one of the most controversial issues during the original WSIS in 2003-05. Over the last two years, we could witness a multiplication of processes, events and commissions seeking new compromises on this controversial topic that would go beyond the consensus reached in 2005. While many of these activities are related to the subject of WSIS+10, they draw a lot of attention and participants away from the official review activities. As a

¹⁶ The GMP platform was mainly used as a database for the data collection in which all relevant information could be regrouped, categorized and visualised in different manners.

¹⁷ The last section of this report provides some suggestions how the research could be further developed.

consequence, though their analysis would represent a big asset to the research presented here, it would take away from the actual review of the WSIS objectives as coordinated by the United Nations and was, thus, excluded from the project.¹⁸

A last limitation results from the attention paid to the contributions of academic experts within the WSIS+10 review: Instead of mapping and assessing the input provided by different categories of actors, the project focuses on the role of expert knowledge and the interactions of communication and media scholars with other actors in the review process. Yet, while it was originally foreseen to analyse the nature of the expert knowledge — provided in particular in form of background reports and studies that would inform the formulation of a post-2015 strategy — this part of the assessment could not be carried out for a number of reasons: Firstly, while academic experts, in particular media and communication scholars, had significantly contributed to the two phases of the WSIS in 2003 (Geneva) and 2005 (Tunis), only a very few of them actively engaged in its 10-year review.¹⁹ Secondly, the little input provided by academics mostly consisted in the organisation of workshops and rather short submissions to open consultations. Until now, the only substantive contribution by media and communication scholars was made through expert reports that UNESCO commissioned for its WSIS+10 review event. Limiting the content analysis to these reports would, however, wrongly reflect the variety of subjects and ways in which input was provided to the various activities. And lastly and most importantly, due to the ‘messiness’²⁰ of the various review activities and the complexity of their interrelations, more attention than originally planned was given to their assessment. As a consequence, the analysis of academic contributions related less to the discursive dimensions than to the performative dimensions of the policy processes.

¹⁸ A thematic section on the GMP mapping platform dedicated to Internet Governance is currently being updated in the context of a similar mapping project: <http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/node/6009>.

¹⁹ A difference is often made between ‘nominal’ and ‘active’ participation (e.g. William J. Drake, “Multistakeholderism: Internal Limitations and External Limits,” *MIND: Multistakeholder Internet Dialog*, Internet Policymaking, no. 2 (2011): 68–72). Nominal participation can be defined as “simply being a member” of a stakeholder group and representing it in an event without actually contributing to the debates. Active participation also includes “taking a role” and contributing to the success of the event (Michael J. Stern and Don A. Dillman, “Community Participation, Social Ties, and Use of the Internet,” *City & Community* 5, no. 4 (2006): 411). By ‘engagement’ we mean a level of participation that even goes beyond this: It consists in a continuous action over a longer time period or a series of events by individual stakeholders who take on responsibility as well as organisational and content-related tasks that go beyond the short duration of a meeting or event. In the ideal case, their ‘engagement’ contributes to shifting the debate and transforming the outcomes or institutional settings in favour of their concerns.

²⁰ See also the blog post about the ‘Mapping WSIS+10’ research project on the Cardiff University Blog: <http://www.jomec.co.uk/blog/exploring-trends-in-global-media-policy-young-scholars-conduct-rapid-response-research/>.

3. The World Summit on the Information Society and its review²¹

The WSIS process

The WSIS has often been described as the first policy event of its kind within the United Nations and as a key event in global communication governance. Under the auspices of the ITU, it was originally planned as a development conference which was to define a common vision of an information society and to find an international answer to the so-called ‘digital divide’ by spreading Internet access in the developing world.²² The two WSIS phases brought together several thousand participants from more than 170 countries to discuss the new global challenges arising from the technological convergence and globalization. But instead of putting forward sustainable solutions addressing socio-economic inequalities, the summit was dominated by an exorbitant technological positivism and a strong focus on commercial and governance aspects of the Internet. Towards the end of the summit, the controversial discussions about Internet Governance and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders within its context had taken primacy over other, more social, cultural or human rights-oriented issues.²³ This focus is also reflected in the final outcome documents of the WSIS²⁴ which are often criticized as essentially meeting the expectations of the private sector and, thus, not representing the multitude of issues addressed during the debates.²⁵

Civil Society participation

Despite its biased outcome, the WSIS is also known for being the first UN summit in which civil society was included in an explicit manner and hence as an effort to make international organisations more transparent and open to non-state actors.²⁶ And even

²¹ The WSIS has been followed by an infinite amount of scholarly work. We, therefore, avoid giving another account of the event and only mention the most important elements that are necessary for the understanding of the WSIS+10 context. For more details see, among many others, Wolfgang Kleinwächter and Daniel Stauffacher, eds., *The World Summit of the Information Society. Moving from the Past into the Future*, UN ICT Taskforce Series 8 (New York: UN ICT Taskforce, 2005); Marc Raboy, “The World Summit on the Information Society and Its Legacy for Global Governance,” *Gazette* 66, no. 3–4 (2004): 225–32; Séan Ó Siochrú, “Will the Real WSIS Please Stand Up?: The Historic Encounter of the ‘Information Society’ and the ‘Communication Society’,” *Gazette* 66, no. 3–4 (2004): 203–24.

²² The WSIS had been proposed by ITU through its Resolution 73 of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Minneapolis, in 1998, and formally authorized by the UNGA in December 2001.

²³ Katharine Sarikakis and Daya Kishan Thussu, eds., *Ideologies of the Internet* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2006), 6.

²⁴ All of the WSIS outcome documents are available on the ITU website: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>.

²⁵ Claudia Padovani, “Debating Communication Imbalances from the MacBride Report to the World Summit on the Information Society: An Analysis of a Changing Discourse,” *Global Media and Communication* 1, no. 3 (2005): 316–38.

²⁶ Just as the WSIS itself, also the role of civil society during the summit has been assessed by an important number of scholars, most prominently Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier, “The Unbearable Lightness of Full Participation in a Global Context. WSIS and Civil Society Participation,” *Towards a Sustainable Information Society: Deconstructing WSIS*, 2005, 17–55; Divina Frau-Meigs, “Civil Society and the

though the inclusion of these actors did not go as far as many had hoped for, the entire WSIS process — from the first preparatory conference in 2001 until its conclusion in 2005 — was marked by a continuous and active presence of civil society actors, in particular NGOs, municipalities, parliamentarians and researchers. Yet, while discussions took place in a multi-stakeholder format and allowed for consultations and exchanges between state and non-state actors, the final decision-making remained within the hands of governments as only their representatives held the right to vote on the outcome documents. In reaction to this, civil society eventually put forward an alternative final statement in which it addressed other than purely economic and governance-oriented problems regarding the information society and called for more radical solutions to global inequalities.²⁷

Legacy and stocktaking process

After five years of discussions, the WSIS resulted in three major outcomes:

Firstly, regarding the mechanism for financing ICT infrastructure development and bridging the ‘digital divide’, many discussions at the WSIS circled around the idea of a global ‘Digital Solidarity Fund’ which was eventually launched in March 2005 in Geneva.²⁸ However, placed on a voluntary basis, it was not supported by most Western governments and private sector donors and thus failed to attract substantial contributions. Secondly, the WSIS mandated the creation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a multistakeholder, non-binding discussion arena that was to take place on an annual basis for an initial period of five years. In 2010 this period was extended for another five years. With this decision to continue deliberations beyond the end of the WSIS process, participants tried to get debates on Internet Governance out of the impasse that it had reached towards the end of the second WSIS phase.²⁹ But even though the IGF is often considered one of the most successful outcomes of the summit, it did not help to

Amplification of Media Governance, during WSIS and beyond,” in *From NWICO to WSIS*, ed. Frau-Meigs et al., 199–224; Arne Hintz, *Civil Society Media and Global Governance: Intervening Into the World Summit on the Information Society* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2009); Marc Raboy and Normand Landry, *Civil Society, Communication, and Global Governance: Issues from the World Summit on the Information Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Marc Raboy, Normand Landry, and Jeremy Shtern, *Digital Solidarities, Communication Policy and Multi-Stakeholder Global Governance: The Legacy of the World Summit on the Information Society* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 2010); Jeremy Shtern, Normand Landry, and Marc Raboy, “The Least Imperfect Form of Global Governance yet? Civil Society and Multi-Stakeholder Governance of Communication,” in *From NWICO to WSIS*, ed. Frau-Meigs et al., 187–98; Sean O Siochrú, “Civil Society Participation in the WSIS Process: Promises and Reality,” *Continuum* 18, no. 3 (2004): 330–44.

²⁷ For this final civil society statement, with the telling title “Much more could have been achieved”, see <http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/WSIS-CS-summit-statement-rev1-23-12-2005-en.doc>.

²⁸ For the details and difficulties of creating the Digital Solidarity Fund, see Kleinwächter and Stauffacher, *The World Summit of the Information Society. Moving from the Past into the Future*, 159; 171ff.

²⁹ For an extensive analysis of the WSIS debates on Internet Governance and the creation of the IGF, see Dmitry Epstein, “The Making of Institutions of Information Governance: The Case of the Internet Governance Forum,” *Journal of Information Technology* 28, no. 2 (2013): 137–49.

overcome the controversies about the governance of core Internet resources which continue to create tensions among governments and other stakeholders.³⁰

And lastly, during the first summit phase in Geneva (2003), WSIS participants agreed on eleven action lines, ranging from information infrastructures over capacity building and security to the ethical dimensions of the information society. Each of them was assigned to one or several international organisations that were to act as (co-) facilitators for the implementation and follow-up of a specific aspect. The Action Lines also serve as indicators for the WSIS stocktaking process which is supposed to provide a register of activities carried out by governments, international organisations, the private sector and civil society.³¹

Follow-up since 2005

In order to follow up on the WSIS debates and its objectives, the ITU hosts a WSIS Forum which is organised every year in cooperation with all other Action Line facilitators. It usually attracts more than 1000 participants and a significant number of High-Level representatives and is hence sometimes considered a competitor to the annual IGF meetings. Besides the ITU, the United Nations Social and Economic Council (ECOSOC) through its subsidiary body, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), is in charge of the follow-up of the WSIS outcomes and of assessing the progress made in their implementation.³² Following pleas from civil society organisations supported by several governments, the annual CSTD meetings were opened up for a wider range of civil society and business organisations than is usually the case within the UN, thus trying to maintain the multistakeholder deliberation format of the WSIS. In 2011 the CSTD published a 5-year review of the WSIS implementation that was based on reports by Action Line facilitators and an open consultation among WSIS stakeholders conducted in 2010.³³ It also marked the halfway point for the large 10-year review that is due for next year.

4. Modalities of the WSIS+10 review and its difficulties

The request for a 10-year review goes back to the WSIS outcome document which asked “the UN General Assembly to make an overall review of the implementation of WSIS

³⁰ As mentioned before, the ongoing debates about Internet Governance are not part of the research presented here. They have, however, strong repercussions on all debates about global communication governance and can therefore not be fully neglected.

³¹ The WSIS stocktaking platform is available online: <http://groups.itu.int/stocktaking/HOME.aspx>.

³² See ECOSOC Resolution (2006/46), “Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development”, passed on 28 July 2006.

³³ The report, entitled ‘Implementing WSIS Outcomes: Experience to Date and Prospects for the Future’ has been published on the CSTD website: http://unctad.org/en/Docs/dtlstict2011d3_en.pdf.

outcomes in 2015”.³⁴ This was confirmed by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 2006 that endorsed the WSIS objectives and confirmed the overall review to be undertaken after a period of ten years.³⁵ Yet, the resolution text did not specify how this review should be conducted and neither did any of the resolutions on the matter of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) that the UNGA has adopted on an annual basis since 2007.³⁶

Open Consultation by UNGIS

The preparation for WSIS+10 was officially initiated in October 2010 by a resolution adopted at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference³⁷ that requested the process to be started at the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). Subsequently, in April 2011, the CEB asked the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) — an inter-agency cooperation mechanism contributing to the achievement of the WSIS objectives³⁸ — to develop initial plans for the 10-year review. UNGIS followed the request by conducting an open consultation consisting of a series of meetings, online discussions and stakeholder submissions. Kicked off at the WSIS Forum 2011, it concluded in May 2012 with a report that proposed a first outline of the overall WSIS+10 procedure and was submitted to the CSTD.³⁹

The opinions expressed during the consultation revealed that stakeholder positions diverged not only regarding the content of the WSIS review, but also in particular as to the shape the review should take and who should be involved in it: While some representatives proposed a major event, preferably a UN summit at the level of Heads of State or at least a High-Level meeting on the level of ministers, others advocated for a smaller meeting, either to take place during the UNGA or attached to the review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that is also due for 2015. While the first option would carry strong political implications and potentially lead to the rewriting of some key

³⁴ Tunis Agenda, para. 111.

³⁵ UNGA Resolution 60-252, “World Summit on the Information Society”, adopted on 27 April 2006.

³⁶ Since 2007, the ICT4D resolution, which among other themes also relates to the WSIS objectives, is submitted and adopted every year in a slightly reworked version. See A/RES/62/182 on 19 Dec 2007; A/RES/63/202 on 19 Dec 2008; A/RES/64/187 on 21 Dec 2001; A/RES/65/141 on 20 Dec 2010; A/RES/66/184 on 22 Dec 2011; A/RES/67/195 on 21 Dec 2012 and A/RES/68/198 on 20 Dec 2013.

³⁷ ITU, Resolution 172 (PP-10), available at: <http://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-ACTF-2010/en>.

³⁸ UNGIS was set up in April 2006 by CEB in order to develop collaboration among its members and to promote, at the UN level, policy issues related to the WSIS objective. UNGIS is currently chaired by ITU. Its 30 members meet once or twice a year.

³⁹ The open online consultation was carried out from 15 June to 5 September 2011, during which eleven written comments and seven video messages were submitted. During the same period, WSIS stakeholders could also provide formal submissions. The details of the consultation process are available at the UNGIS website: <http://www.ungis.org/ThematicMeetingsActivities/OpenConsultationProcess-WSIS+10.aspx>. The summaries of statements and submissions can be found in the annexes of the Action Plan: <http://www.ungis.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=rf5Gn5MKcKM%3d&tabid=1789&mid=5861>.

WSIS outcomes, the second option would be more symbolic in nature and, most probably, simply re-affirm and update the objectives set during the WSIS in 2005.

UNGA resolutions

The action plan prepared by UNGIS was first discussed by the CEB and later during the WSIS Forum in May 2012. It was eventually picked up during UNGA's 67th session in late 2012 when Algeria, on behalf of Group of 77 (G-77)⁴⁰ and China, submitted a draft resolution on ICT4D which, for the first time, proposed a clear format for WSIS+10. The resolution text suggested a High-Level review conference to be held in 2015. Its preparations were "to take place through an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory committee, which will define the agenda of the conference, finalize the outcome document of the conference, and decide on the modalities for the participation of other stakeholders in the conference".⁴¹

With this proposal the G-77 made clear that their idea of a WSIS+10 review event would not move beyond the achievements of the summit in 2003-05 regarding the participation of non-state actors in UN policy formulations. Quite the contrary, by explicitly mentioning that both agenda and outcome, as well as the role of non-governmental stakeholders should be decided upon by an intergovernmental committee, the G-77 took a clear stance against multistakeholder negotiations in which civil society, business and the academic-technical community interact with governmental representatives on an equal level in order to produce a joint outcome document. It was, therefore, not surprising that countries that commonly support the multistakeholder model did not accept the draft resolution as it was. After several rounds of informal consultations, a compromise text was adopted that deleted all proposed elements concerning the WSIS+10 summit and, instead, deferred the decision about the modalities of the review process until the end of 2013.⁴²

When the subject was discussed again in 2013, the matter had not changed. In November 2013 Fiji introduced an updated text of the ICT4D resolution which not only repeated word-for-word the contested elements on WSIS+10 included in the draft suggested by Algeria in 2012, but also moved the proposed event to an even higher level by calling for

⁴⁰ The G-77 is a loose coalition of developing countries that was established by a group of seventy-seven UN member states in 1964 at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Although the number of members has increased to 133, the original name was kept. Cooperating through this group, member countries try to advance their collective economic interests thanks to increased negotiating powers within the UN.

⁴¹ UNGA Draft resolution A/C.2/67/L.36 'Information and communications technologies for development', 67th session, Second Committee, page 6. Available at: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/C.2/67/L.36&Lang=E>.

⁴² UNGA Resolution A/RES/67/195. 67th session. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/195.

a summit in which governments should be represented “at the highest possible level”.⁴³ However, the idea of holding a full UN summit, with all the necessary preparatory meetings, was still not acceptable for a significant part of the UN member states which also balked at the costs of such a meeting.⁴⁴ Thus, in December 2013, another compromise resolution was adopted which — once again — postponed a forceful decision. Instead of agreeing on a clear procedure, it requested UNGA’s president to appoint two co-facilitators in order to convene an ‘open intergovernmental consultation’ which should produce an agreement on the issue by the end of March 2014.⁴⁵ Besides this, the draft resolution took a clear stance on the question of multistakeholder participation as it emphasized the important role played by private sector, civil society and technical communities – an acknowledgement that had been included in the Tunis Agenda in 2005 but had been absent from the ICT4D resolutions ever since.⁴⁶

Yet another open consultation?

Following up on the resolution, the UNGA appointed Finland and Tunisia to facilitate the requested intergovernmental consultation process on the WSIS+10 modalities. Even though the wording of the resolution made clear that the consultation was to be of a ‘multi-lateral’ instead of ‘multi-stakeholder’ nature, the adjective ‘open’ raised hope on the part of civil society that the process would at least be public and transparent. As it remained very unclear how this consultation would concretely look, over 20 members of civil society addressed a letter to the two co-facilitators in which they expressed their wish to contribute to both the deliberations and the WSIS+10 review.⁴⁷ Yet, as of the end of June, neither the consultations nor their results were fully open to the larger public as it appears that reaching a consensus proved to be very difficult. After the 17th CSTD session in May 2014 announced that concrete results should be achieved by the end of the same month, the two co-facilitators finally drafted a resolution text which is supposed to represent “a sensitive and balanced document taking into consideration the views and concerns expressed by Member States during the process”.⁴⁸ It proposes to conclude the

⁴³ UNGA Draft resolution A/C.2./68/L.40. 68th session, Second Committee. Available at: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/1772470.77226639.html>.

⁴⁴ During CSTD’s 16th session in June 2013, Russia had offered to host such a summit in Sochi, but its proposal was deferred to the General Assembly and its responsibility for taking a decision on the modalities of the review process. See UN ECOSOC, CSTD Report on the 16th session (June 2013), E/2013/31-E/CN.16/2013/5. Available at: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/CSTD_Report_on_the_Sixteenth_Session.pdf.

⁴⁵ UNGA Resolution A/RES/68/198, 68th session. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/198.

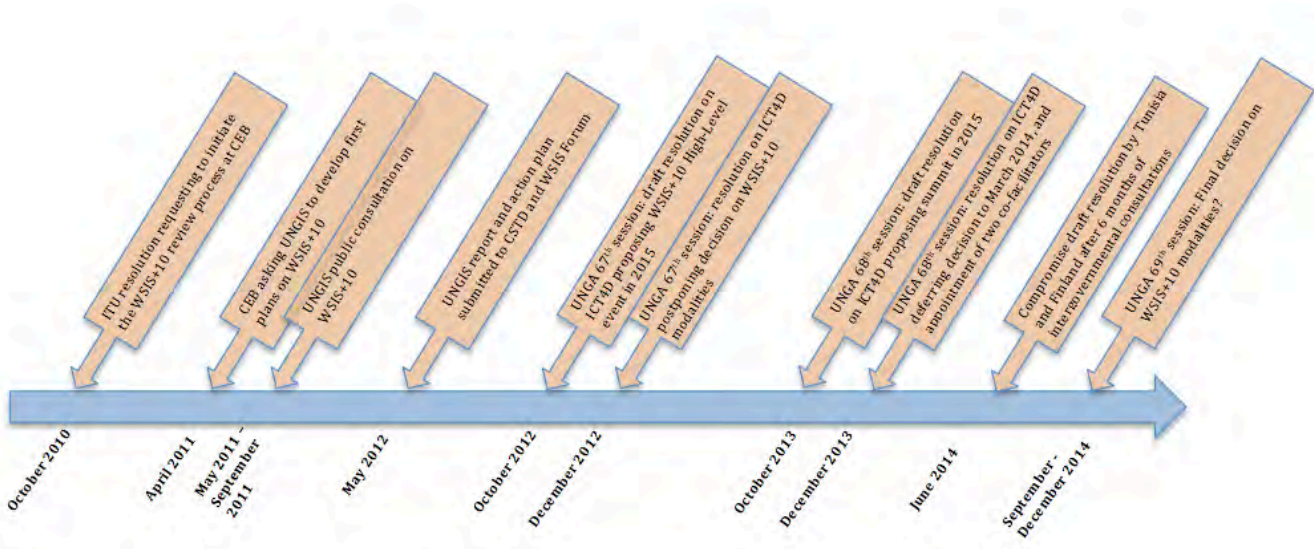
⁴⁶ Samantha Dickinson, “UN Puts off Decision on Overall Review of WSIS for a Few More Months,” Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, (December 12, 2013), <http://linguasynaptica.com/unga-68-ict4d-resolution/>.

⁴⁷ The full text of the letter and a list of signatories are available here: <http://bestbits.net/ws10-modalities/>.

⁴⁸ See: Letter by Tunisia and Finland to the president of the UNGA and final draft resolution for WSIS+10, 30 June 2014: http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/letters/782014World_Summit_on

overall review by a two-day High Level Meeting of the UNGA which should be preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory process that starts in June 2015 and also takes into account input from all other stakeholders. The compromise seems to consist of giving a new major WSIS event to those calling for it but, at the same, limiting the consultation process to only four months. The chances of reaching a consensus document that would go beyond the agreements set in the original WSIS documents are very small, which in its turn represents a concession to those refusing a renegotiation of these outcomes. But until the draft resolution is not adopted by the UNGA, it still remains unclear if this proposed solution will eventually set the modalities of the overall review.

The timeline below illustrates the decision-making process on the WSIS+10 modalities at the level of the United Nations (ITU, CEB, UNGIS, UNGA and CSTD):



Timeline I: Decision-making about WSIS+10 modalities

5. Main WSIS+10 processes

While the indecisiveness of governments at the level of the UN General Assembly leaves it unclear if there is still a major overarching review event to come, currently there are three main processes that dominated the WSIS+10 review:

- the UNESCO WSIS+10 review meeting which took place in February 2013;

[the Information Society - final draft resolution - 8 July 2014.pdf](#). The particularity of this draft resolution is that it will not be re-negotiated again by ECOSOC before going to the UNGA; this is a very unusual practice that should avoid much discussion on the subject outside of the General Assembly.

- the WSIS+10 High Level Event organised by ITU in July 2014 and preceded by an open consultation process;
- and the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (WGEC), a multistakeholder group established in 2012 under the auspices of the CSTD.

The first two were coordinated by the two UN agencies leading the implementation of most WSIS objectives, UNESCO and ITU;⁴⁹ they were self-contained processes and produced independent outcome documents which are supposed to feed into the overall review by the UNGA in 2015. In contrast, the WGEC has been established upon request by the UNGA in order to eventually reach a consensus amongst its member states concerning the very contested issue of stakeholder roles in Internet Governance. It is, therefore, less centred on the WSIS objectives and their implementation but touches more directly on the procedure of global communication governance itself and the future of intergovernmental policy-making in that area.

UNESCO WSIS+10 review meeting (February 2013)

Policy process

The first WSIS+10 Review event, with the official title ‘Towards Knowledge Societies For Peace and Sustainable Development’, was hosted by UNESCO and organised in co-operation with ITU, UNDP and UNCTAD.⁵⁰ Following the action plan proposed by UNGIS in mid-2011, UNESCO’s General Conference had authorized the organisation in November 2011 to prepare such a major event in the lead-up to the overall WSIS review.⁵¹ In September 2012, the UNESCO secretariat started an online discussion on the WSIS Knowledge Communities Platform⁵² about the themes that should be discussed

⁴⁹ While ITU is the main facilitator for two Action Lines (C2. Information and communication infrastructure; C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs), UNESCO is responsible for four full lines (C3. Access to information and knowledge; C8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content; C9. Media; C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society) and two application aspects (C7. ICT Applications: e-learning; e-science). In addition, both organisations act as co-facilitators for other Action Lines. For the full overview on the Action Lines and their facilitating stakeholders, see <http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/facilitators.html>.

⁵⁰ All information and documents of the event are available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/wsis-10-review-event-25-27-february-2013/homepage/>.

⁵¹ UNESCO 36th General Conference, 36 C/Resolution 56, Paris, November 2011.

⁵² The WSIS Knowledge Communities is an online collaborative platform hosted by UNESCO that is regularly used for open consultations about WSIS-related issues. Its objective is to facilitate information gathering and exchange and to stimulate common development of ideas and projects in the area of ICTs for development. During this particular consultation, 21 comments were received, mostly from civil society actors (see <http://www.wsis-community.org/pg/forum/topic/583571/closed-multistakeholder->

during its WSIS+10 event, the format of the event and its preparatory process.

Because funding and preparation time for the event were limited, UNESCO abstained from organising preparatory meetings that would negotiate first drafts of a possible outcome document through formal and informal stakeholder consultations. Instead, several weeks before the event, the UNESCO secretariat published a number of background studies on the UNESCO website and the WSIS Knowledge Communities Platform, and invited stakeholders to send comments and remarks.

Taking place in Paris from 25-27 February 2013⁵³, the event consisted of a mix of plenaries and parallel sessions and was thus similar to the IGF in terms of structure and composition. The first of the three days was entirely dedicated to so-called ‘High-Level debates’, during which statements by government officials, representatives of the private sector and civil society organisations followed one another on the stage. The exchange among stakeholders was deferred to the last two days of the meeting and their 83 parallel sessions with panel discussions and round tables, organised by various stakeholders. All session chairs were asked to produce summaries and recommendations to be made available on the event’s website. These were then, together with the recommendations drawn from the preliminary background studies, supposed to feed into the drafting process for the final statement of the meeting.⁵⁴

Based on the working papers and the session reports, the final statement with the title ‘Information and Knowledge for All: An Expanded Vision and a Renewed Commitment’⁵⁵ was developed by a “multistakeholder open-ended drafting group” that met for several drafting sessions during the three days of the event. The meetings of the drafting group, though open to all participants and very well frequented, were not announced in the official programme and their duration appeared rather limited in comparison to the many hours spent on plenary and workshop sessions. In addition, it has been criticized that the bottom-up drafting process was in some way flawed by the fact that UNESCO had provided the text that served as the starting point for the consensus process and that the final statement consequently still clearly bore UNESCO’s signature and reflected the concerns of other stakeholders less strongly than some might

[wsis10-first-reveiw-event-what-are-your-views-on-key-topics-the-preparatory-process-and-format-/](#)). Yet, due to technical difficulties, the platform was less used than UNESCO had hoped for.

⁵³ It can be supposed that, by scheduling the event in early 2013, and thus before any other review activity, UNESCO tried to gain the greatest possible attention by stakeholders involved in the WSIS process. In addition, we can assume that UNESCO’s leaders were interested in holding such a prestigious event prior to the (re-)election of the Director-General, which took place during the 37th session of the General Conference later in 2013.

⁵⁴ It, however, appears that for the majority of the sessions, no report was submitted or published online.

⁵⁵ Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI_/pdf/wsis/WSIS_10_Event/wsis10_final_statement_en.pdf.

have wished.⁵⁶ The non-binding statement was adopted by consensus at the close of the event and later also endorsed by UNESCO's General Conference.⁵⁷

Actors and contributions

Ten years after the WSIS introduced the multistakeholder model as a prioritized setting for global media debates, the UNESCO WSIS+10 event confirmed the growing importance of this format: Classified as an 'international expert conference', the meeting even went beyond WSIS settings as stakeholders were not only invited to participate in the debates on an equal level with governments, but also the final statement, and thus the main outcome of the meeting was drafted and negotiated through multistakeholder deliberations.

According to UNESCO, the meeting was attended by over 1450 participants from 130 different countries and joined by another 800 remote participants. All stakeholder groups were represented including intergovernmental and international organisations, governments, private sector, media, the academic, technical and professional communities and civil society. According to official statistics, the largest groups of participants came from civil society (32%), followed by representatives of governments (22%). With 13%, participants from 'academia' represented the third largest stakeholder group.⁵⁸

However, regarding not only nominal but also active contributions to the event, representatives from academia were much less visible: While the large majority of the 83 workshops was organised by UNESCO itself and a number of civil society organisations, only three sessions were initiated and chaired by scholars and academic experts.⁵⁹ Thus, from all stakeholder groups, only the private sector made fewer contributions in the form of conference sessions. On the other hand, in contrast to other official WSIS+10 activities, the UNESCO event was the only one that commissioned the preparation of independent expert reports, consisting of the background studies that were made

⁵⁶ Michael Gurstein, "Making HappyTalk in Paris: Disneyland and the WSIS +10 Review," *Gurstein's Community Informatics Blog*, February 26, 2013, <http://gurstein.wordpress.com/2013/02/26/making-happytalk-in-paris-disneyland-and-the-wsis-10-review>.

⁵⁷ UNESCO 37 C/Resolutions, 51, November 2013. The final statement initially caused some debates during the General Conference as some representatives proposed to change its wording, but was eventually endorsed by all member states.

⁵⁸ In UNESCO's statistics, the category of Civil Society does not include academic and professional experts, which are listed separately. See UNESCO, 'Towards Knowledge Societies for Peace and Sustainable Development', First WSIS+10 Review Event, Outcomes. Paris, 2013 (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS_10_Event/wsis10_outcomes_en.pdf) and presentation of Jānis Kārklīņš, then Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, at CSTD, 4 June 2013 (unctad.org/meetings/en/Presentation/cstd2013_WSIS_Karklins.pdf).

⁵⁹ IAMCR (chaired by Divina Frau-Meigs) organised a workshop on Media and Internet Governance from civil society perspective; a session, coordinated by the Indiana State University (chaired by Richard C. Vincent) assessed the role of civil society in media governance before and after the WSIS; and a third academic session, organised by the International Social Science Council, explored the role of digital technology in social sciences.

available prior to the event.⁶⁰ Each of these reports focused on one of the WSIS Action Lines under UNESCO's responsibilities, analysed trends and proposed a set of prospective recommendations for the particular issue. As a consequence, the final outcome document of the UNESCO event was not only based on the deliberations taking place during the meeting but also on the findings of these studies and thus on scientific research. In order to evaluate the impact these reports actually had on the outcome document, more content-related analysis would be needed.

Main issues and controversies

Not only the background studies but also the issues discussed during the plenaries and parallel sessions were in line with the fields of UNESCO's mandate and the WSIS Action Lines under its responsibility. Being hosted by the UN agency in charge of education, culture, science, media and information, most debates circled around issues of media and information policy, like multilingualism, cultural and linguistic diversity, freedom of expression, online privacy, digital security, development of cyberscience, access for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples as well as ethical and societal challenges of the information society. In this way they circumvented most matters that since the beginning of the WSIS process have caused the biggest controversies among stakeholders, like — most prominently — the debate over the UN's role in Internet Governance or the US oversight of Internet infrastructures. As a result the event managed to avoid the fierce debates and confrontations between stakeholders or member states that can regularly be witnessed in ITU and UNGA discussions on the subject. Some saw the importance of the event, consequently, not in its outcome but in its “setting the tone for the review” by “neutralizing the atmosphere and conducting an amiable meeting”.⁶¹

Yet, other observers considered the exclusion of controversial issues and the lack of real stocktaking to be the main weaknesses of the event.⁶² Instead of assessing what has been achieved since 2003-05 and critically analysing the past and current drawbacks as well as future challenges, most plenary sessions appeared to repeat the rather naïve techno-

⁶⁰ The reports were prepared by Robin Mansell, Gaëtan Tremblay, Alice Lee (in cooperation with Jesús Lau, Toni Carbo and Natalia Gendina), Axel Leblois, Stephen Kovats, Roberto Borrero, Divina Frau-Meigs, Susana Finkelievich, Celina Fischnaller, Serena Heckler, Anahit Minasyan and S. Romi Mukherjee. Some of them are longstanding independent experts working with UNESCO, while others were selected for their familiarity with the issue to be addressed. The reports were supposed to assess trends and develop forward looking recommendations, based on the analysis of what had been achieved (or not) during the last 10 years.

⁶¹ Deborah Brown, “WSIS+10: Taking Stock and Driving the Global Internet Policy Agenda Forward”, Access blog, March 4, 2013.

⁶² The exclusion of stocktaking appeared to be a deliberate decision by the organisation. Instead, it prepared a large report on the review of its Action Lines in the follow-up of the event, which also served as its contribution to the ITU WSIS+10 activities. See: UNESCO, ‘Building inclusive Knowledge Societies’, A review of UNESCO's action in implementing the WSIS outcomes, Paris, 2014 (available at: http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/inc/docs/ralfreports/WSIS10_ALF_Reporting-UNESCO.pdf).

positivist discourse of “the digital as the vector of all utopias and hopes”⁶³ which had already dominated the original WSIS. Accordingly, the final statement also simply re-affirmed the commitments made at the WSIS and did not introduce substantial new elements.⁶⁴ It, however, needs to be recognized that some of the parallel sessions tried to move beyond this perspective and tackle more exigent questions that have emerged or grown in urgency since the original WSIS. Yet, they did not dominate the tone of the event.

ITU’s WSIS+10 Open Consultation and High Level Event (July 2013 – June 2014)

Policy process

Some months after UNESCO held the first WSIS+10 multistakeholder event, ITU initiated another review stream: Preceded by a year-long open consultation process launched in June 2013, ITU held a WSIS+10 High-Level Event from 10 to 13 June 2014. The event was originally planned to take place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in April 2014. However, after the UNGA deferred the decision about the modalities of the overall review in its session in late 2013, the Egypt meeting was first postponed to an undefined date and later entirely cancelled. Instead, ITU decided to hold the WSIS+10 High-Level Event as an extended version of the WSIS Forum in Geneva.⁶⁵

The preparatory process, which consisted of ‘an open and inclusive consultation among WSIS Stakeholders’, was aimed at developing multistakeholder consensus on two outcome documents as well as the thematic aspects and the format of the High-Level Event. Not only the event itself but also this preceding consultation process was subject to repeated modifications: The original plan was to hold four physical meetings in between which stakeholders were invited to submit input via the so-called ‘Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform’ (MPP).⁶⁶ However, the drafting of the outcome documents progressed so slowly that another 4-day session was added after the fourth

⁶³ Francesca Musiani, “WSIS+10: The Self-Praising Feast of Multi-Stakeholderism in Internet Governance,” *Internet Policy Review*, April 12, 2013, <http://policyreview.info/articles/analysis/wsis10-self-praising-feast-multi-stakeholderism-internet-governance>.

⁶⁴ For this reason and because the Disney Company was one of the financial contributors of the event, the meeting has, most ironically, been described as “three days of ‘happytalk’ folks talking ‘happy’ [...], all rolled up into one happyface package as cut off from the real world as is Disneyland itself” (Gurstein, “Making HappyTalk in Paris”).

⁶⁵ There were no official reasons given why the event did not take place in Egypt, where it was to be held back-to-back with ITU’s sixth World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC). It can, however, be assumed that the political and security situation in the region contributed to the decision to move the WTDC to another host country and attach the WSIS+10 High-Level event to the WSIS forum in Geneva instead.

⁶⁶ All details, dates and submissions of the open consultation process are available on the MPP: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/mpp/#>.

meeting, followed by an additional half-day meeting scheduled last-minute on the day before the High-Level Event itself. As a result, participants complained that additional meetings and change of dates made it particularly difficult for representatives of civil society to follow the process and attend the physical sessions.⁶⁷

The two outcome documents, drafted through the MPP and subsequently submitted to the High-Level Event, were, first, a ‘Statement on the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes’ and, second, a new ‘WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015’. In addition, all WSIS Action Line facilitators, member states and other stakeholders were asked to submit 10-year reports on the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.⁶⁸ The statement on the implementation — and thus the actual ‘review’ document — was supposed to be based on the progress on the WSIS objectives outlined in the country and Action Line reports. Yet, since only a few of these reports were submitted in time and participants of the drafting sessions showed little interest in the stocktaking exercise, the work on the second document which represents the vision for a new post-2015 framework, was conducted in parallel.⁶⁹

The drafting process, which had started as a very open and constructive exchange, became increasingly difficult towards its end. Until the last moment participants failed to reach consensus on some paragraphs, mainly those concerning the vision’s update of several Action Lines.⁷⁰ However, to much surprise, through private negotiations during the event itself, the ITU Secretary-General and his staff succeeded in convincing those governments most reluctant to accept the draft statements to agree on a new compromise text.⁷¹ As a result, all attending stakeholders eventually endorsed the two outcome

⁶⁷ Deborah Brown, “Spotlight on Internet Governance 2014: Part One WSIS Review,” Access blog, February 11, 2014, <https://www.accessnow.org/blog/2014/02/11/spotlight-on-internet-governance-2014-part-one-wsis-review>; Lea Kaspar and Deborah Brown, “Second MPP WSIS+10 meeting: Summary,” Blog, December 30, 2013, <http://www.gp-digital.org/gpd-update/second-mpp-wsis10-meeting/>.

⁶⁸ Not all of them actually complied with this request before the High-Level Event. All available reports were posted on the ITU website: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/reports/>.

⁶⁹ This led to the complaint of several participants, in particular the United States’ representatives, that the drafting process is conducted in the wrong order, as the results of the stocktaking were supposed to condition the content of the vision document and therefore should have been drafted first (Richard Hill, interview, April 3, 2014; Lea Kaspar, interview, May 20, 2014).

⁷⁰ The three Action Lines that failed to reach consensus were C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, C8. Cultural Diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content, and C9. Media.

⁷¹ For a detailed account of the last two drafting session and the negotiation process during the High-Level Event, see Samantha Dickinson, “The WSIS+10 HLE 6th MPP Meeting and Its Aftermath,” Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, (June 11, 2014), <http://linguasynaptica.com/wsis-6th-mpp/>; Samantha Dickinson, “The Endorsement of the WSIS+10 Vision Document,” Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, (June 12, 2014), <http://linguasynaptica.com/wsis-vision-endorsed/>.

documents by acclamation.⁷² Just as in UNESCO's case, it is expected that they will be endorsed by ITU's next Plenipotentiary Conference starting in October 2014, thus giving the non-binding documents a more official status within the organisation.

Besides the plenaries discussing and adopting the two documents, the High-Level Event was composed of two tracks: A 'High-Level Track' of two full days during which high-ranking representatives from all stakeholder groups read out official policy statements concerning the progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes and their ideas for a vision beyond 2015.⁷³ This was complemented by the 'Forum Track', consisting of high-level panels, a ministerial round table, action line and country workshops and other thematic sessions, which aimed to provide a platform for knowledge exchange and debate on the different WSIS issues. In addition, several pre-events took place on the day before the meeting. However, since the documents had been developed through the MPP, both the policy statements and the debates of the Forum Track did not add any elements to the outcome of the event.

Actors and contributions

Similar to the UNESCO WSIS+10 meeting, the ITU review activities also applied the multistakeholder model: All consultations, drafting and decision-making processes were equally open to governments, private sector, civil society, international organisations and relevant regional organisations. As this is a rather unusual setting for ITU negotiations on policy documents, the format was justified by declaring the process as a joint initiative by various UN agencies for which ITU only acted as a facilitator. Despite this, the level of engagement in the preparatory process was rather limited.⁷⁴ For each stage of the procedure stakeholders were invited to submit comments, separately for each part of the two outcome documents, via the MPP. More than 450 submissions were received over the full length of the drafting process. Yet, these were issued by only 45 different stakeholders, 24 of them belonging to the large category of civil society (including only two submissions from academic institutions).⁷⁵

In addition, although each physical meeting was officially attended by about 140-160 stakeholders from about 70 countries, those who actually intervened and significantly

⁷² It is ITU tradition not to vote on documents but to adopt them by acclamation. The WSIS+10 statement and vision are available here: www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/E_Outcome_Document_2014_V2.pdf.

⁷³ This track did not foresee any discussion, resulting in very little interest by the audience. Hence, speakers followed each other on the stage in front of an often nearly empty room.

⁷⁴ Brown, "Spotlight on Internet Governance 2014: Part One WSIS Review"; Anja Kovacs, phone interview, July 3, 2014.

⁷⁵ Besides 16 governments, 24 civil society or professional organisations (e.g. Access, APIG, ICANN, ISOC, IFLA and IFIP, etc.) as well as 4 international organisations (ITU, UNESCO, ESCWA and UN WOMEN) and one business organisation (ARM Holdings) submitted to the MPP. The two academic submissions were issued by the UNESCO Chair of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and the Center of Technology and Society from the FGV Direito Rio.

contributed to the deliberations were much less numerous. Most of the participants represented governments and international organisations as well as civil society but none of them represented an academic institution.⁷⁶ Observers remarked that the attendance of civil society actors decreased towards the end of the consultation process, while, at the same time, the interest of governments seemed to increase. Several reasons can be found for this: First of all, the last meetings were arranged at short notice which made it difficult for civil society actors to physically attend them. Secondly, with the time passing, it became clearer that the United Nations might abstain from holding another major consultation process on the WSIS review in 2015. Thus, many governments thought that the ITU WSIS+10 review might be the last occasion to actually influence the overall review and the development of a post-2015 vision. As a result, “the dynamic of the MPPs seemed to change over time to subtly favour the use of more intergovernmental negotiation tactics”.⁷⁷ This again added to the frustration of the attending non-state actors who increasingly withdrew from the deliberations.

The tendency towards more intergovernmental negotiation was confirmed during the High-Level Event where last-minute consensus on the proposed outcome documents was achieved through bilateral and private conversations. That way, within only one day of “hard and non-transparent lobbying”, agreements were found on text elements where no consensus had been reached during 16 days of multistakeholder deliberations.⁷⁸ On the one hand, this showed that the disagreement had not been caused by the multistakeholder process per se but by governments which failed to consent. But on the other hand, it made observers reflect about the compatibility of multistakeholder, open and transparent decision-making mechanism and intergovernmental settings where concrete results need to be produced within a limited timeframe.⁷⁹ Many participants of the High-Level Event hence criticized the entire ITU WSIS+10 process as not being consistent enough in its multistakeholder approach. Yet, others insist that the MPP showed “for the first time a full-fledged multistakeholder process being implemented in the ITU”.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ The webcasts and reports of all drafting sessions are available on the MPP. One of the participants estimated that less than 40 delegates actually contributed to the debates (Hill, interview). While remote participation was offered for all physical sessions, the interaction of remote and physical participants remained limited. Also none of the media and communication scholars, who were at the origin of the civil society involvement in the original WSIS or very active during its process, engaged in MPP meetings (confirmed by: Kovacs, interview; Kaspar, interview).

⁷⁷ Dickinson, “What’s Going on with WSIS+10? Part 1: Some Context.” Dickinson also remarks that it is simply easier for governments to have their delegates based in Geneva attend the many additional MPP meetings than for civil society representatives based in different parts of the world.

⁷⁸ Dickinson, “The Endorsement of the WSIS+10 Vision Document.” Albeit many participants criticized that these last-minute consultations did not include all stakeholders, the chair of the MPP did actually consult with those civil society and private sector representatives that had engaged in the process over its entire period (Kovacs, interview).

⁷⁹ Dickinson, “What’s Going on with WSIS+10? Part 1: Some Context”.

⁸⁰ “Statement on WSIS+10 HLE”, on behalf of the civil society organisations engaged throughout the WSIS+10 MPP (Access, APC, CDT, CTS/FGV, Global Partners Digital, IFLA, the Internet Democracy

Compared to the eventful consultation process, the High-Level Event itself appeared less exciting. It was attended by more than 1600 participants who participated in over 150 workshops and interactive sessions.⁸¹ Most of the meetings of the Forum Track were organised by international organisations and governments while civil society organisations coordinated a number of workshops on the day before the pre-events (e.g. IFIP, ISOC, ICANN and IFLA). Even though the proposed workshops also touched on delicate issues (e.g. the failure of WCIT, Internet Governance taxonomy, stakeholder roles and enhanced cooperation, protection of human rights online), the overall tone was similar to the original WSIS and the UNESCO review event as the debates and statements “repeatedly emphasized the importance of ICTs in global connectivity, and their impact on GDP growth and socio-cultural change and progress”.⁸²

Main issues and controversies

Unlike the UNESCO event, which remained restricted to the Action Lines under UNESCO’s responsibility, the ITU process was mandated to review all Action Lines and to develop a new vision concerning the full range of subjects relating to the WSIS objectives. Hence, its debates were much more controversial than the ones of the UNESCO drafting group.⁸³ The subjects causing most difficulties were Internet Governance (including Enhanced Cooperation and multistakeholderism) and human rights (most prominently Freedom of Expression and gender rights) — and thus the two issues that had already been the most contested during the original WSIS in 2003-05.⁸⁴ In addition, the question of surveillance and security turned out to be a new controversial subject as it did not have the same importance back then. From the start of ITU’s consultation process, all elements of the draft texts relating to one of the above subjects immediately led to fierce debates in which none of the opposing parties was willing to cede its position in order to find a compromise. As a result, at the end of every physical meeting entire paragraphs were set in square brackets, indicating that delegates had not been able to agree on them.⁸⁵

Project, IDEA, and KICTAnet),” June 2014, <https://www.accessnow.org/blog/2014/06/20/statement-on-wsis10-hle>.

⁸¹ ITU did not provide statistics about the composition by different stakeholder groups.

⁸² Geetha Hariharan, *WSIS+10 High Level Event: A Bird’s Eye Report*, Report, (June 20, 2014), <http://cis-india.org/internet-governance/blog/wsis-10-high-level-event-a-birds-eye-report>.

⁸³ Interestingly, towards the end of the process, it was UNESCO’s Action Lines that were causing most of the controversies, in particular ‘C.9 Media’ whose compromise text was opposed by Iran until the very last day. This shows that the representatives participating in the two processes, even though representing the same governments, did not defend the same position.

⁸⁴ Hans Klein, “Understanding WSIS: An Institutional Analysis of the UN World Summit on the Information Society,” *Information Technologies and International Development*, 1, no. 3–4 (2004): 3–13; Wolfgang Kleinwächter, “Beyond ICANN Vs ITU? How WSIS Tries to Enter the New Territory of Internet Governance,” *Gazette* 66, no. 3–4 (2004): 233–51.

⁸⁵ Samantha Dickinson, “Multistakeholder Processes Are Messy. Thoughts from the WSIS+10 Preparatory Process,” Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, February 19, 2014, <http://linguasynaptica.com/2014/02/>.

It would go beyond the purpose of this report to assess why these issues are particularly contentious, especially in the context of ITU. But it can be assumed that, by conducting the consultation process in an open multistakeholder setting, ITU had tried to overcome existing tensions among its member states, in particular the binary opposition that is often encountered in discussions about Internet Governance.⁸⁶ And although the inclusion of other stakeholders, as business and civil society, certainly added to the diversity of opinions, it did not necessarily contribute to less tense debates and easier consensus.

There are two reasons for it: Firstly, in comparison to traditional intergovernmental deliberations in which all participants are well-trained diplomats, the tone of civil society and private sector interventions was often rather harsh, which — according to several observers — rendered the achievement of compromises even more difficult.⁸⁷ In addition, discussions relating to the Tunis Agenda, and thus going beyond the Action Lines defined by the first summit phase in Geneva, were consistently interrupted by governments which did not consider the WSIS+10 review as the right venue for these debates.⁸⁸ As a consequence, the debate on contested text elements was repeatedly deferred from one physical meeting to the next. Eventually, it was decided that all “proposals referring to the outcomes of the Tunis phase of WSIS on the following, implementation mechanism, follow up, internet governance (other than internet issues relevant to action lines), IGF, enhanced cooperation, CSTD” were to be avoided.⁸⁹ By excluding in such a way the most contentious issues, it was eventually — after many efforts — possible to reach consensus on other difficult aspects. However, in order to reach this consensus most parts of the outcome documents were turned into rather weak compromise text and thus did neither propose new elements nor innovative solutions.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ It is common to describe that governments separate in two camps when it comes to Internet Governance: one calling for a new UN body for Internet regulation, and one trying to maintain the status-quo. While it is problematic to simplify the diverging positions in this way as many more nuances exist, it is this binary logic that dominates most of the discussions on the matter.

⁸⁷ Hill, interview; Dickinson, “Multistakeholder Processes Are Messy. Thoughts from the WSIS+10 Preparatory Process.” Dickinson also remarked the great danger that governments might “use the messiness of the [...] meetings to justify why multistakeholderism is a failure and that there needs to be a return to more orderly governments-only negotiations”.

⁸⁸ In particular the US government claimed that some of the issues raised in the consultation process did not fall under ITU’s core competences and should therefore not be discussed in an ITU setting. See the US statement during the third physical meeting: http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/inc/docs/phase4/WSIS10.hle-ocp_phase4_statementUS.docx.

⁸⁹ See ‘WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes’, preamble. In the same spirit, many references to the politically loaded term ‘Internet’ were simply replaced by the more general expression ‘ICT’, which appeared to cause less controversies (Hill, interview).

⁹⁰ For the assessment of the process and the reached compromise, see also Richard Hill, “What Questions Did The WSIS+10 High Level Event Answer?,” Blog, *Intellectual Property Watch*, (June 16, 2014), <http://www.ip-watch.org/2014/06/16/what-questions-did-the-wsis10-high-level-event-answer/>.

United Nations' Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (May 2013 – May 2014)

Policy process

If the question of Internet Governance was outside the scope of the WSIS+10 review conducted by UNESCO and deliberately excluded from the documents drafted through ITU's open consultation process, it was at the heart of the last review activity analysed in this report. Following the ICT4D resolution adopted by the UNGA in 2012⁹¹, a multistakeholder working group was created in 2013 with the task to develop recommendations on how to implement the WSIS mandate regarding the cooperation of stakeholders in Internet Governance.⁹² Operating under the auspices of the CSTD, this 'Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation on Public Policy Issues Pertaining to the Internet' (WGEC) was supposed to finally find a solution for one of the most controversial issues that was left unresolved by the WSIS: In an attempt to overcome fundamental discrepancies regarding the responsibility for the technical, operational and policy-making aspects of the Internet, the Tunis Agenda had introduced in 2005 the concept of "Enhanced Cooperation" through which stakeholders were supposed to cooperate "on equal footing".⁹³ However, the document did not specify what the two notions precisely meant, either how they should be implemented or measured. As a consequence, nine years later, there are still diverging interpretations and the WGEC was set up to consolidate them.⁹⁴

Between May 2013 and May 2014, the WGEC convened in Geneva four times: The first meeting mainly served to develop a questionnaire through which the group sought input from UN member states and other stakeholders about various questions related to themes of cooperation and improved governance of the Internet. By the second meeting,

⁹¹ UNGA Resolution A/RES/67/195. 67th session.

⁹² Official details and meeting summaries of the WGEC are available on the UNCTAD website: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WGEC.aspx>. The creation of the WGEC had been preceded by a one-day open consultation on enhanced cooperation, organised by the CSTD on 18 May 2012 and a long and controversial discussion during the CSTD session in May 2012, which ended with the proposal to mandate a working group. Markus Kummer, "Internet Governance: What Is Enhanced Cooperation?" *Internet Society Blog*, July 2, 2012, <http://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2012/07/internet-governance-what-enhanced-cooperation>.

⁹³ Para. 69 of the Tunis Agenda called for "enhanced cooperation in the future, to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities, in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, but not in the day-to-day technical and operational matters, that do not impact on international public policy issues" (<http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>).

⁹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the 'Enhanced Cooperation' principle, see also Carolina Aguerre, "Enhancing Stakeholder Cooperation," *Team ARIN*, Blog, November 26, 2013, <http://teamarin.net/2013/11/26/enhancing-stakeholder-cooperation-guest-blog>; Lea Kaspar et al., *Unlocking Enhanced Cooperation*, Internet Governance: Global South Perspectives Paper Series (Global Partners Digital, January 2014); Wolfgang Kleinwächter, "Enhanced Cooperation in Internet Governance: From Mystery to Clarity?," *CircleID*, Blog, November 12, 2013, http://www.circleid.com/posts/20131112_enhanced_cooperation_in_internet_governance_mystery_to_clarity.

in November 2013, the group initiated a mapping exercise to categorize the issues raised in the survey responses and to identify possible existing mechanisms on how certain problems are currently dealt with.⁹⁵ Since the analysis of the responses could not be concluded during the meeting, an ad-hoc correspondence group was created to complete the work.

During its third meeting in February 2014, the WGEC discussed proposals for draft recommendations based on the survey responses and the correspondence group's assessment. The meeting was planned to be the WGEC's final meeting but since no consensus could be reached concerning some controversial issues and time was lacking for discussing others, a fourth meeting was scheduled for May 2014.⁹⁶

Also during this additional fourth session, divergences on a number of issues continued to persist so that the group eventually decided not to submit recommendations to the CSTD.⁹⁷ Instead the WGEC's members entrusted the chair with preparing a report that would summarize the conducted work and the controversies that had been encountered during the meetings.⁹⁸ The report was orally presented during CSTD's 17th session in May 2014 where, after long deliberations, it was eventually decided to recommend that the work initiated by the Working Group 'might' be continued by CSTD's secretariat.⁹⁹ The commission thereby handed over the final decision about the group's future to ECOSOC which will discuss the matter in its next session in July 2014.

Actors and contributions

Like the other two WSIS+10 activities, the WGEC followed the multistakeholder model. But unlike the other two, where the outcome was adopted by the present stakeholder community, the WGEC could only submit recommendations which would then have to be approved by the CSTD and thus a government-only body.

The group was comprised of 42 members: 22 government members, 5 from international

⁹⁵ The questionnaire and an overview on the responses were made available on the WGEC website: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/2013_WGEC_Questionnaire.pdf and http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/CSTD2014_WGEC04_responses_en.xls.

⁹⁶ For detailed reports on the 2nd and 3rd meetings from civil society perspective, see Joy Liddicoat, Avri Doria, and Lea Kaspar, *The UN Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation: Report on the Second Meeting* (APC, November 2013), <http://www.apc.org/en/blog/un-working-group-enhanced-cooperation-report-second>; Joy Liddicoat, *Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation: The next Enthralling Episode* (APC, February 2014), <https://www.apc.org/en/blog/working-group-enhanced-cooperation-next-enthralling>; Avri Doria, "Five Days in the Enhanced Cooperation Box," *Personal Blog*, March 1, 2014, <http://avri.doria.org/post/78199466296/five-days-in-the-enhanced-cooperation-box>.

⁹⁷ There were a number of preliminary recommendations on which members of the group were able to agree, e.g. regarding questions of development and capacity building. However, since no common understanding could be reached for the main issues – the definitions of 'enhanced cooperation' and 'equal footing' – the group saw no point in submitting these few results to the CSTD (Anja Kovacs, phone interview, July 3, 2014).

⁹⁸ See CSTD, Report on CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, E/CN.16/2014/CRP.3, May 2014. Available at: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162014crp3_en.pdf.

⁹⁹ CSTD, Report on the 17th session, E/2014/31-E/CN.16/2014/4, 12-16 May 2014, page 6.

organisations, 5 from the private sector, 5 from the academia/technical community and 5 from civil society.¹⁰⁰ The representatives from the last two groups were nominated through an open call for applications and a transparent bottom-up selection process. They were supposed to act in their capacities as members of stakeholder groups and not as representatives of their respective organisations.¹⁰¹

From its composition and mandate, the WGEC was thus similar to the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) which had been established after the first phase of the WSIS in 2003 in order to develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in Internet Governance. As a matter of fact, three members of the WGIG in 2003-05 now also participated in the WGEC.¹⁰² And like the WGIG, the WGEC's meetings were open to observers after a request had been made for it during the first session. While the WGIG had operated under Chatham House Rules, the WGEC introduced video streaming in order to allow members and observers to join the discussions via remote participation. As a result, the group's work was entirely open and several members from civil society closely followed the debates, shared ideas and comments during the meetings and reported live via Twitter.¹⁰³

Besides these options, other stakeholders were able to contribute to the debates by replying to the questionnaire distributed in May 2013. In total 69 responses were received, including 29 from governments, 23 from civil society, 11 from technical-academic field, and eight from the private sector. More than half of the responses came from developing countries but only a very few of all replies were submitted by individual researchers or academic institutions.¹⁰⁴ In addition the correspondence group gathered further input through an open call; 19 comments were received which were added to the submissions

¹⁰⁰ The group was chaired by Peter Major. Its members from civil society were Carlos A. Afonso (NUPEF Institute, Brazil), Avri Doria (independent researcher), Grace Githaiga (KICTANET, Kenya), Joy Liddicoat (Association for Progressive Communication) and Parminder Jeet Singh (IT for Change, India). From the academic/technical community participated: Constance Bommelaer (Internet Society), Alex Corenthin (Cheikh Anta Diop Univeristy), Chris Disspain (.au Domain Administrator), Baher Esmat (ICANN) and Andrés Piazza (Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry) (or the full list, see http://unctad.org/Sections/un_cstd/docs/cstd2013d04_Membership.pdf). From the participating governments, the most active were the USA, Sweden, Nigeria, Japan, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and India (Kaspar, interview).

¹⁰¹ The nominations for civil society were coordinated by Anriette Esterhuysen, Executive Director of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). The nomination process for the technical/academic group was conducted by the 'Internet technical collaboration group'.

¹⁰² These members are Avri Doria and Carlos A. Afonso (both representing civil society) and Baher Esmat (from the technical community).

¹⁰³ The most active observers from civil society were Anja Kovacs, Samantha Dickinson, Matthew Shears, Joana Veron, Lea Kaspar, Deborah Brown and Richard Hill (Liddicoat, Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation: The next Enthralling Episode.; Avri Doria, phone interview, July 3, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ All individual responses were posted on the WGEC's website: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WGEC-Responses.aspx>.

edited by the group.¹⁰⁵

On the basis of the submitted contributions and their categorization by the correspondence group, the various WGEC members proposed draft recommendations which were discussed during the last two sessions.¹⁰⁶ But in contrast to the ITU WSIS+10 process where the entirety of the submissions was integrated in the first draft statements, there was no mechanism to ensure that all survey responses were eventually reflected in the proposed recommendation texts considered by the WGEC. Instead, the written input received during the open consultation process served only to inform the group members, who then submitted their own recommendations. While some members sought to reflect the full range of the input in their proposals, it can be assumed that others simply followed their own policy agenda.¹⁰⁷

Main issues and controversies

Already during the WSIS in 2005, the concept of Enhanced Cooperation was subject to diverging interpretations: While some actors, in particular those from the governmental side, invoked it to justify the call for more multilateral decision-making through a new Internet organisation under the auspices of the United Nations, others saw it as a way to strengthen the multistakeholder model. During the years following the WSIS, the discrepancy between these positions has not been overcome, as recurrent disputes on the issue in international fora, like ITU's World Conference on International Telecommunication (WCIT) in 2012, have shown.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising that the WGEC also encountered difficulties in reaching an agreement on the matter.

From the beginning, it became clear that members' opinions mainly diverged regarding three major questions: firstly, whether a new intergovernmental mechanism should be created for decision-making relating to the Internet; secondly, whether the principle of 'enhanced cooperation' has already been fully implemented or not; and, thirdly, concerning the relationship of democracy and multistakeholderism.¹⁰⁹ After three physical meetings and one year of exchanging of ideas, the draft recommendations prepared for

¹⁰⁵ The driving forces behind the correspondence group were two civil society actors, Lea Kaspar and Samantha Dickinson, but the group was open to everyone who had responded to a public call for interest. In addition, all members of the WGEC were automatically members of the group, although most of them did not engage in the work (Doria, interview; Kaspar, interview).

¹⁰⁶ These draft recommendations were made available on Google Drive: <https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B55cFPaDsE.fVU9UR3JsX0VHdWs&usp=sharing>.

¹⁰⁷ Kovacs, interview.

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed analysis about the confrontation witnessed at the WCIT and its history, see Wolfgang Kleinwächter, "WCIT and Internet Governance: Harmless Resolution or Trojan Horse?," *CircleID*, Blog, December 17, 2012, http://www.circleid.com/posts/20121217_wcit_and_internet_governance_harmless_resolution_or_trojan_horse/; Milton Mueller, "ITU Phobia: Why WCIT Was Derailed," *IPG - Internet Governance Project*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.internetgovernance.org/2012/12/18/itu-phobia-why-wcit-was-derailed/>.

¹⁰⁹ Doria, "Five Days in the Enhanced Cooperation Box"; Liddicoat, Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation: The next Enthralling Episode.

the last session of the WGEC showed that the opposite approaches to these questions still persisted. As a result, the group proved itself unable to agree on a set of recommendations on how to fully operationalize enhanced cooperation that could have been submitted to the CSTD and the UNGA.

However, as some of the civil society participants claim, it would not do the group's work justice to consider the WGEC as a failure. Instead it needs to be recognized that, regarding some questions, the group was able to move beyond the deconstructive binary logic of positions that directly oppose one another. In particular concerning the wish of some governments to create a UN mechanism for Internet Governance, alternative scenarios were positively discussed. One example is the creation of a platform, possibly under the auspices of the CSTD, through which governments could share information and resources. Thus, incompatible viewpoints had — to a small but yet existing extent — made way “to a more inclusive acknowledgement of diverse views and diverse options for the way forward”.¹¹⁰ Yet, in the end, the discrepancy between participating governments about the roles and responsibilities of governments versus other stakeholders in Internet Governance could not be overcome; thus every alternative solution that could be accused of either favouring one or another side, was doomed to failure.¹¹¹

Overview and interrelation

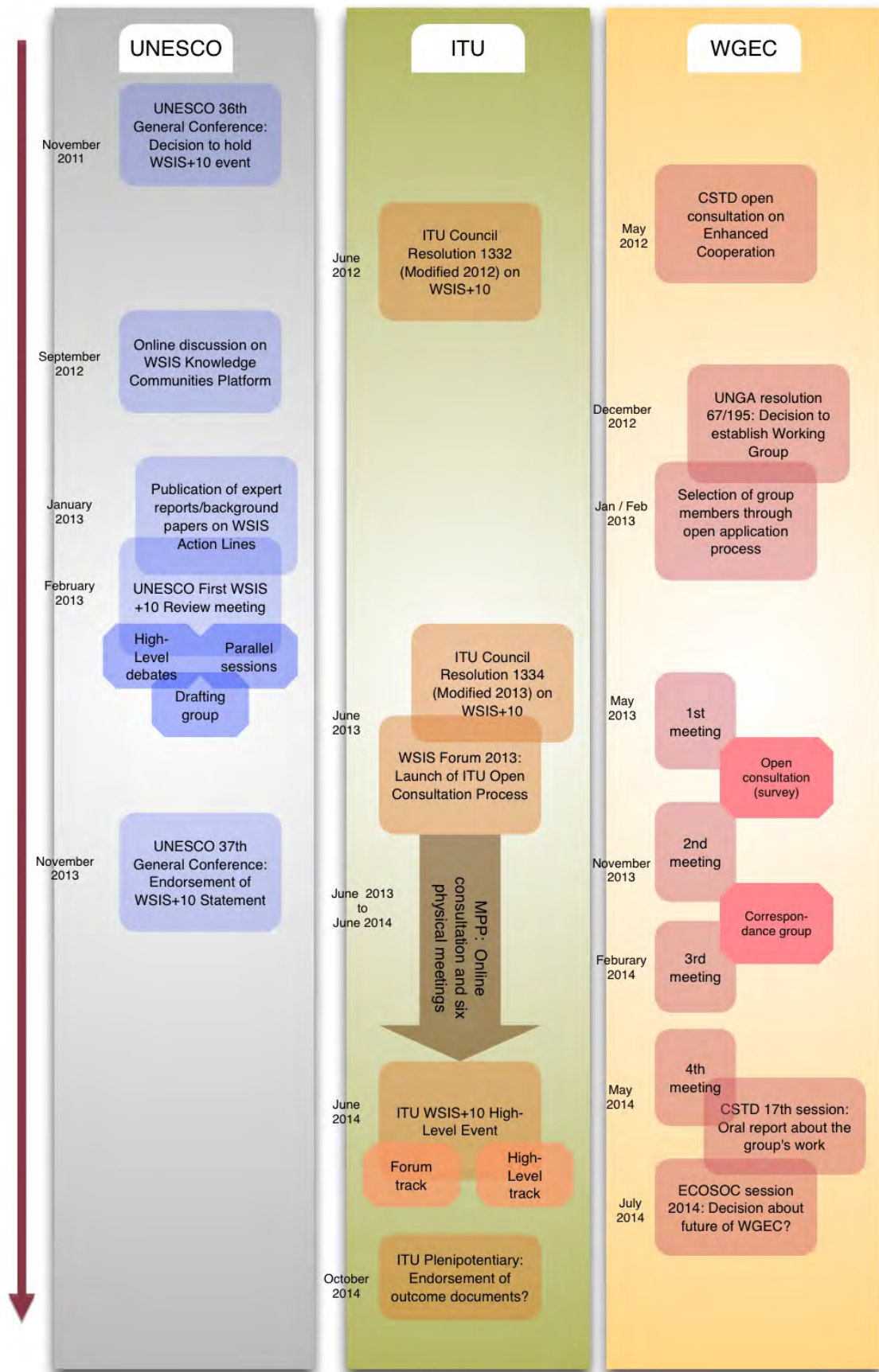
Processes

With the conclusion of the ITU High-Level Event on 13 June 2014, the WSIS+10 review has reached the end of its first phase. With UNESCO's first WSIS+10 Review Meeting, ITU's Open Consultation Process and High-Level Event and the CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, the task of revising the implementation of WSIS objectives and of developing a common post-2015 framework was divided among three different UN bodies. Each of these activities was, in addition, split up in several phases and required different kinds of input. While the UNESCO and the ITU events both concluded with final statements adopted by the stakeholder community, the WGEC failed to reach conclusions. It might, therefore, be the only one of the three review streams to be extended until 2015 or beyond. The outcome documents of all three processes have in common that they are supposed to feed into the overall review at the level of the United Nations. However, it still remains unclear to which level these documents will be considered by the next UNGA.

The following timeline gives a chronological overview of the various review activities that took place since May 2012:

¹¹⁰ Liddicoat, Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation: The next Enthralling Episode.

¹¹¹ As a consequence, some civil society representatives and observers even hesitated to intervene in the politicized final discussions so as not to be accused of choosing one side over another (Kovacs, interview).



Timeline II: Overview of all WSIS+10 review streams

Formats and dynamics

The three processes — coordinated by UNESCO, ITU and the WGEC — not only followed a different institutional and chronological procedure but also they allowed for different ways and levels of participation. While all three processes applied a multistakeholder format, the concrete possibilities to interact and provide input differed between the various review activities and their different phases. Also, many of these processes took place in parallel, information and documents were published on different websites and meetings were deferred, cancelled or added to the agenda at short notice. This ‘messiness’, consisting in a lack of transparency, overview and coordination, made it difficult for actors who were not directly involved in related policy processes to fully benefit from the opportunities to comment on draft documents, intervene in debates or submit formal statements.

Furthermore, there were different stakeholders’ dynamics in each of the three processes. In the WGEC’s meetings, a balance between state and non-state actors was part of the institutional framework due to the group’s limited membership. At the UNESCO event, non-state actors outnumbered the representatives of governments and international organisation in terms of nominal participation. They were, though, less actively involved in the coordination of sessions and panel discussions. Following the same development towards increased multistakeholderism, ITU also appeared much more open to civil society than it had been in the past. However, the discussions both at ITU and within the WGEC were much more dominated by the existing tensions between governments than was the case for the UNESCO event. As a result, even though non-state actors were present and actively participated, it was the (lack of) approval by governments that ultimately determined the outcome of the deliberations.¹¹²

During the process some civil society participants and observers were concerned that governments might try to interpret the difficulties encountered by the ITU WSIS+10 open consultation process or WGEC’s inability to develop common recommendations as a result of the multistakeholder discussion format.¹¹³ As a matter of fact, while outside of the United Nations the multistakeholder format is increasingly strengthened through global events such as the recent NETmundial meeting hosted by Brazil in April 2014¹¹⁴, all attempts to apply the same setting to policy discussions within the UN system bear the risk that just as much energy is spent on discussing the institutional format as on the

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ For example, Avri Doria, “Quick Update on WGEC Meeting Day 2”, email on the Internet Governance Caucus mailing list, May 2, 2014.

¹¹⁴ The NETmundial meeting, with the full title ‘Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance’, was set to focus on “crafting Internet governance principles and proposing a roadmap for the further evolution of the Internet governance ecosystem”. For more details see <http://netmundial.br/> and for some first analysis Milton Mueller, “Netmundial Moves Net Governance beyond WSIS,” Blog, *IGP - Internet Governance Project*, (April 27, 2014), <http://www.internetgovernance.org/2014/04/27/netmundial-moves-net-governance-beyond-wsis/>.

subjects themselves. Yet, as a very active observer of all review streams aptly remarked, it was more the normative beliefs behind the issues discussed than the format of the debates that hampered all consensus reaching:

‘If anyone tries to suggest that it’s the multistakeholder model that caused ‘failure’, or ‘unreasonable’ behaviour by other delegates, then it’s just ignoring the larger reality of the situation: with the best intentions in the world, it is never going to be possible for a bunch of medium to low level diplomats and non-government stakeholders, in a meeting that really is only a small event when considered in the context of wider world politics, to find solutions to decades-long ideological impasses.’¹¹⁵

A review without review?

If the discussion format of the event caused tensions among the participating actors, the issues they dealt with did even more so. This was particularly the case of the ITU review and the WGEC, and to a much smaller extent for the UNESCO event — and this mostly because the objective for the three review streams was not the same: The UNESCO statement, which was elaborated by a drafting group during the event itself, focused on issues related to UNESCO’s mandate and the WSIS Action Lines under its responsibility, and thus avoided controversial questions around Enhanced Cooperation and Internet Governance. In addition it had the clear task to look ahead and to develop a strategy for the coming years. It thereby avoided all backward-looking discussion about the validity and timeliness of the WSIS Action Lines adopted in 2003.

The ITU statement and post-2015 vision were instead drafted through a long, slow and often painful open deliberation process which tried to combine both a backward and a forward-looking perspective. While one document was to evaluate the progress made with regards to each Action Line, the other document was to update them in order to reach a post-2015 vision for WSIS. Many participants therefore saw a chance to re-open the discussion on WSIS Action Lines and to potentially add new elements or even additional lines. Yet, this was blocked by those stakeholders who preferred the *status quo* of global communication governance and therefore refused to set a precedent for revising the entire WSIS framework.¹¹⁶ In the end, all innovative elements were watered down to compromised text that confirmed the agreements reached in 2003 and 2005.

The WGEC followed a similar dynamic. It was set up to take stock of the various ways in which ‘Enhanced Cooperation’ is currently happening in different countries and to identify implementation gaps through a public consultation. Yet, it eventually ended up

¹¹⁵ Samantha Dickinson, “What’s Going on with WSIS+10? Part 2: The Upcoming HLE and yet Another MPP,” Blog, *Lingua Synaptica*, (June 6, 2014), <http://linguasynaptica.com/whats-with-wsis-2/>.

¹¹⁶ There was, for example, a proposal by UN Woman to add an Action Line on Gender, which was vehemently opposed not only by governments not particularly in favour of more gender balance, but also by many Western governments which did not want to open the ‘Pandora’s box’ of discussing new Action Lines (Kovacs, interview; Kapsner, interview).

discussing draft recommendations that were not necessarily based on the survey responses received but were driven by the policy agenda of the group members. As a consequence, it also did not succeed in overcoming the profound discrepancies that had dominated all debates on the matter during the WSIS and ever since.

After all, as of now, the WSIS+10 review process appears to be marked by a lack of actual stocktaking and fundamental revision of the WSIS outcomes and their implementation. Except for the few expert studies commissioned by UNESCO, which focused on trends instead of the past, there has not been any scientific attempt to develop indicators and measurements that could offer valuable assessment of the efforts undertaken during the last ten years. Thus, the appropriateness of the WSIS framework has in no way been evaluated. Instead, all review streams seem entirely driven by political programmes and by disagreements circling around the role of governments and non-state actors in global communication governance. One of the consequences is a lack of focus on the problems which the original WSIS was set up to solve — namely the ‘digital divide’ and other development-related matters.¹¹⁷ Whether this is one of the reasons why until now many civil society actors, in particular those from academia, showed little interest in the entire review procedure, would be an interesting subject to explore further.

6. Prospects for further research

As mentioned earlier, in addition to the empirical research goals, the research and mapping done for this report should serve as a basis for further qualitative analysis. In the following, a few suggestions are made about how the research could be further developed:

Interrelation with Internet Governance debates

In 2005 the governments participating in the WSIS decided to separate the issues related to Internet Governance from the other questions discussed during the WSIS by moving them into the Internet Governance Forum. Yet, the last 10 years have shown that this separation is an artificial one: Today even more than back then, most issues of global communication governance are related to the Internet and to the roles of different stakeholders in its governance structure. As a result, neither the institutional dynamics of the overall WSIS+10 review nor the ecosystem of the actors involved and their positions can be fully understood if assessed separately from the current events discussing different matters of Internet Governance. Their analysis would, therefore, represent a significant

¹¹⁷ As an observer describes, already during the original WSIS, the debate on development issues “was taken hostage” by the controversies around the modalities of the overall review and the debate on ‘Enhanced Cooperation’ (Ibid.).

asset to the assessment of WSIS+10.

Analysing contributions and discourses

Until now, the presented research mainly addressed the performative dimension of the WSIS+10 review processes as it focused on the institutional and normative framework of the various review streams. However, for a more complete understanding of the actors involved in the review, their contributions and their influence on the processes, the discursive dimension of policy-making needs to be addressed as well. One way to do this would be to focus on the concrete influence of civil society actors in the development of a post-2015 framework for WSIS. In this context, it would be particularly interesting to assess the role of epistemic communities either from a comparative cross-process perspective or through a historical analysis starting from the original WSIS process.

Intergovernmental versus multistakeholder policy processes

The ITU WSIS+10 process has shown that multistakeholder negotiation processes within international policy-making bodies are possible but difficult — be it for the ‘messiness’, which means the uncoordinated processes and changing schedules, or the switch back to more intergovernmental deliberations as soon as hard deadlines are approaching. In order to understand better the possibilities and challenges of combining multistakeholder decision-making with intergovernmental settings, in-depth research is needed. This could also bridge the gap to the literature about civil society participation in global communication governance that appeared during and shortly after the original WSIS and aid to explain the lack of engagement in the current review activities.

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List of abbreviations

CEB	United Nations Chief Executive Board for Coordination
CSTD	Commission on Science and Technology for Development
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GMP	Global Media Policy
G-77	Group of 77
IAMCR	International Association for Media and Communication Research
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MPP	Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGIS	United Nations Group on the Information Society
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCIT	World Conference on International Telecommunication
WGEC	Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation
WGIG	Working Group on Internet Governance
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WSIS+10	10-year review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes

List of important websites

ITU WSIS+10 High-Level Event:

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/>

ITU WSIS+10 Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform:

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/review/mpp/#>

Mapping Global Media Policy Platform: Thematic section on WSIS+10:

<http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/node/10256>

UNESCO WSIS+10 Review Event: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/wsis-10-review-event-25-27-february-2013/homepage/>

UNGIS - United Nations Group on the Information Society: <http://www.ungis.org/>

UNGIS Open Consultation Process on the Overall Review of the WSIS Outcomes:

<http://www.ungis.org/ThematicMeetingsActivities/OpenConsultationProcess-WSIS+10.aspx>

WGEC - United Nations Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation:

<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WGEC.aspx>

WSIS - World Summit on the Information Society: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>

WSIS Knowledge Communities Platform: <http://www.wsis-community.org/>

Visualisations of the WSIS+10 and related processes

Internet Governance Processes towards WSIS+10/post-15:

<http://bestbits.net/wp-uploads/diagram.html>

Internet Governance Processes: Visualising the playing field:

<http://www.gp-digital.org/publication/internet-governance-processes-visualising-the-playing-field/>

Mapping Global Media Policy, Thematic Section on WSIS+10:

http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/viz/dendrogram_d3/section/10256

Mapping Global Media Policy, Thematic Section on Internet Governance:

http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/viz/sunburst_d3/section/6009