

Internet Governance Statement on the Decision to Exclude Non-governmental stakeholders from Drafting Groups

September 28, 2005

0. We want to thank the chair for your personal efforts to ensure transparency and inclusion. We also want to thank the many nations that have supported the non-governmental organizations in our quest to fully participate in this Prepcom. Now that it has become the practice of some drafting groups to expel non-governmental participants, Civil society is forced to protest.

Civil Society believes all non-governmental partners should be able to make statements on the same basis as agreed for the subcommittees, to remain in the room as observers for the entire session and to further contribute at the discretion of the chair of the drafting groups. Such procedures would put into practice the commitment to the “full participation of all stakeholders” (e.g. Para 39.)

1. The decisions to exclude non-governmental stakeholders from meaningful participation in the drafting groups are not acceptable as a matter of principle. The WSIS and the WGIG have affirmed that governance of the Internet must be based on real partnerships with the participation of all stakeholders in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. These principles are central to the Geneva documents.

The decisions made to exclude non-governmental stakeholders from meaningful participation in the drafting groups breaks these fundamental conditions and undermines the legitimacy of all outcomes of the WSIS. The sincerity of commitments made by some governments to these principles is now open to question.

2. The decisions to exclude non-governmental stakeholders from the drafting groups are not about rules and procedure, but rather a matter of political courage and principle. In each meeting you have the choice: to be inclusive or exclusive, to work in partnership, with transparency and openness, or to chose not to do so. There was a great opportunity here to move forward with all the progress we have made within the UN and WSIS, but this has been a move backwards.

3. The Internet is the creation of the multi-stakeholder cooperation of academia, civil society, governments, private sector and technologists. There has never been a more successful multi-stakeholder partnership than the one that has created and nurtured the Internet. Governments in Geneva risk jeopardizing this partnership.

4. The WGIG process demonstrated that civil society organizations contribute positively. Our exclusion deprives the Prepcom of valuable knowledge, expertise and perspectives. Civil society has been, and will continue to be, the main force for promoting capacity building and development of the Internet in developing countries. Civil society understands what is needed in order to continue that work, and exclusion from the drafting groups makes it more difficult for us to continue that work effectively.

5. The WSIS Plan of Action cannot be implemented by governments alone: the active engagement of civil society actors is needed in the follow-up stage; our exclusion today would discourage many from engaging after Tunis and would therefore reduce the chances of effectively implementing the ambitious Plan of Action of Geneva.

6. We strongly protest the decisions to exclude non-governmental observers from the drafting groups. The Tunis declaration will be meaningless if it is not seen as legitimate by all those involved in the creation and evolution of the Internet, its applications, services and content.