

Statement on the contribution for document WSIS-II/PC-3/DT/10 (Chapter Three: Internet Governance)

Submitted by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

On behalf of the Informal Coalition on Financing ICTD

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The Informal Coalition on Financing ICTD wishes to contribute its thoughts on Section 4 Measures to promote development of the Chair's excellent paper on Chapter 3 on Internet Governance. We focus our attention on points 56 and 57 on making Internet access affordable.

Apart from being a logical infrastructure, the Internet consists as much in the physical network that connects all people and enables them to use it for achieving their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life (Geneva Declaration of Principles). Effective universal access to the Internet and effective use of the Internet for all people therefore comprises a core policy issue of Internet Governance.

The Internet is a global public space that should be open and accessible to all on a non-discriminatory basis. It is a global public infrastructure and a global public good, whose value increases the more people and organizations are added to it. This is the positive network externality that the Internet has the potential to bring to human relations. And hence universal Internet access is a key goal of the WSIS Plan of Action that commits us all to connecting half the world's inhabitants to ICTs by 2015. According to ITU figures, 46% of the developed world's inhabitants are already connected to the Internet. Only 5% of the developing world's inhabitants have Internet access. So the WSIS goal requires us to find ways of connecting 45% of the developing world to the Internet by 2015. This translates into connecting approximately 2.2 billion people in the developing world to the Internet in one decade.

This is obviously a mammoth task but one that we should not shrink from. It requires us to find innovative ways to make Internet access affordable. And this is why we propose that in addition to dealing with unequal international interconnection costs and developing low cost equipment as proposed in the Chair's paper, the following steps should be included to make the Internet truly ubiquitous:

- a) Reducing international Internet costs
  - by different policy options towards universal access. These may include eliminating exploitative monopolistic practices for international backbone provision, including through submarine cables;
  - by supporting the establishment of national and international internet exchange points;
  - by building local demand for national, regional and international

backbone networks;

- by reducing costs charged by backbone providers;

b) Through public initiatives for backbone and Internet provision in areas of market failure that, inter alia, leverage existing public infrastructure like electricity and railways networks;

c) Eliminating exploitative monopolistic practices that affect the provision of IP-based services, including VoIP;

d) Exploring an open network access approach to extending Internet access in communities, particularly through the promotion of SME and community networking;

e) Reconfiguring the mandate of national Universal Access Funds to support Internet connectivity, applications and content development and capacity building;

f) Exploring the development of local initiatives for content and applications development as a way of reducing the cost of connecting to the Internet;

g) Exploring the use of free and open source software, specially for the provision of public services in areas such as education and health;

h) Promoting free-share or open content paradigm for socio-development content on the Internet, and recognizing it as distinct from commercial content that may require different IPR regimes.

i) Encouraging organisations to continue the study of the question of the International Internet Connectivity (IIC) as an urgent matter to develop appropriate Recommendations;

k) Developing low-cost equipment, especially for use in developing countries.