

Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society

Civil society organizations intervention

June 10, 2005

Mr. President.

My name is Olinca Marino and I am speaking on behalf of the signatory civil society organizations.

We want to make a note of our position on some of the essential issues pertaining to the information society:

- One of the main results of the WSIS process will eventually be the creation of a global body to be in charge of internet governance. It is crucial to establish transparent mechanisms that assure the full participation in equal conditions of developing countries and civil society in the said body.

- Radio and television digitalization process, as well as technological convergence should explore the potential of the democratization of communication, ensuring plurality and diversity in content and media, including the expansion of the number of licenses and the mechanisms that guarantee equal access to them. Interactivity should be maximized so that it is used as a tool for citizen participation in communication and for social inclusion. Local and regional production of technology and content should be strengthened.

Internationally agreed development objectives must provide the general framework for the implementation of financing mechanisms for ICTs for development. Although we consider it is opportune to analyze some of the proposals included in the report of the Task Force on Financing Mechanisms, we emphatically highlight that private initiatives cannot displace the central role of public financing in ensuring citizens' widespread access to and use of information and communication technologies. In this sense, the market's limits should be explicitly recognized to satisfy the needs in matters pertaining to information and communication, particularly in areas that are not very profitable.

- It is necessary to develop capacity-building programmes to formulate and implement national financing strategies for ICTs for development. Hence, it is desirable to explore the creation of a global instrument to assist developing countries in making better use of existing financial mechanisms and to provide incentives for greater South-South cooperation.

- The implementation of innovative financing sources for ICTs for development, both public and private, national and international, that are consistent with national development strategies and that do not involve the diversion of official state aid previously committed to other ends. Such mechanisms can consist of, among others, the use of taxes or global fees or the implementation of debt exchange programmes. Local and national financing strategies to support the initial development of alternatives based on ICTs as community property should also be considered.

- The three pillars for the construction of information societies are not telecommunications, equipment and software, rather info-ethics, digital education (with an approach on the use and social impact) and real and effective citizen

participation in all the phases of the process, from the definition of public policy related to the information society and its impact to its implementation and evaluation.

- The promotion of free software implies certain social, educational, scientific, political and economic benefits for the region. Open licensing models are essential for the free exchange of knowledge, which would benefit of national the development and the production of own local knowledge.

- The promotion of the production of technological and organizational knowledge by Southern countries, makes them proactive actors in the development of information societies and not passive agents nor mere consumers of developed countries' technologies.

We emphasize that the strengthening of democracies and the construction of citizenship is based on the recognition of the role of civil society as a political actor. For this reason, we express our nonconformity with the fact that at the Latin American and Caribbean Ministerial Regional Conference, held in preparation for the second phase of the WSIS, the multistakeholder mechanisms for participation and procedural rules established within the framework of the Summit were not respected. This has hindered the participation of civil society delegates in the discussions and meetings and appropriate access to the documents being discussed.

We express our concern on the formation of the official panels in which the absence of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity is evident. We assume that these have not been deliberate omissions but do feel it is indicative of how much we have left to go in the creation of inclusive information societies. We pledge our continued support to the development of social systems based on justice and equity within a framework continental solidarity.

Thank You, Mr. President,

Signatory Organizations:

Amarc
Aler
Funredes
Links
Argentinean Digital Organization Network (Red de Organizaciones Digitales Argentinas, Rodar)
Cris México
Geledés – Black Women Institute (Instituto da Mulher Negra)
Articulação de Ongs de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras
Articulação Cris Brasil
Rede Dawn
Cemina
WSIS Gender Caucus
Association for Progressive Communications:
Colnodo
LaNeta
Nodo Tau
Cepes
Wamani
Item

APC Women's Networking Support Programme
LAC ICT Policy Monitor (Monitor de Políticas de TIC en LAC)
Rits – Information Network for the Third Sector (Rede de Informações Para o Terceiro Setor)

TRADUCCIÓN: Association for Progressive Communications, APC.