



**Statement from the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
for the WSIS+10 High Level Meeting¹**

New York, 16 December, 2015

The Association for Progressive Communications is a global non-governmental network with 70 members in more than 47 countries, mostly from the global south. APC has been mobilising the power of ICTs for social justice and development for the last 25 years, and has participated in the WSIS process since its inception.

We are pleased that the Outcome reaffirms the WSIS principles of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

We are particularly pleased about the emphasis placed on human rights and gender equality. We would have liked to see explicit mention of economic, social and cultural rights but believe they are implicit in the human rights frameworks mentioned in the text. We strongly support the Action Plan to Close the Gender Digital Gap launched yesterday by UN Women, the ITU, and their partners. But we must also remember that gender justice cannot be achieved on the internet alone. Social values and practices that harm and marginalise women exist everywhere, even in developed countries. For women to feel safe and empowered on the internet they need more than access, they need respect, access to justice and equality online and offline.

We hope that the document, and the process that produced it will reinvigorate efforts to create enabling policy environments and mobilise ICT for development at all levels, and encourage collaboration and allocation of resources needed to bring about positive change.

We are pleased that the Outcome links the WSIS process with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, we are concerned that it does not really

¹ Delivered by Deborah Brown on behalf of APC's executive director, Anriette Esterhuysen.

address how this should be done. For the next WSIS review to be a meaningful input into the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, integration with the SDGs needs to be part of the follow up and implementation in both processes, and concrete steps must be taken to ensure this integration, at all levels, particularly at country level.

We very much value that the document recognises that multistakeholder and multilateral approaches are not mutually exclusive and believe this is precisely how the proposed CSTD working group should approach its task.

But cooperation and multistakeholder approaches governance is not only needed at global level. Governments need to put into place processes that reflect the WSIS principles at the national levels.

We appreciate the emphasis on the multistakeholder approach in the document, but we would have liked it to look at the private sector not just as a partner, but as an actor with human rights responsibilities. Some internet business models pose a threat to the internet as a public resource and to human rights, such as the right to privacy and access to information. We are disappointed that the outcome document failed to assert what was so clearly stated at NETmundial: that the internet is a global resource that should be managed in the public interest.

We urge member states who worked so hard to reach agreement on this outcome document to uphold their human rights commitments online and offline. This means ending mass surveillance, both between and within countries. And releasing journalists, activists, bloggers who have been imprisoned as result of their use of the internet for human rights and social justice. We call for the dropping of charges and release of Alaa Abdel Fattah, Bassel Khartabil, Khadijah Ismayilova, and Hisham Almiraat, among too many others.

Finally, we must stop pitting human rights against security. This is a false dichotomy. When talking about security we must ask - security for who? Approaches to cybersecurity must be truly people-centred, and underpinned by human rights. Efforts to build trust, confidence and security in the use of ICTs, can only be done through open, inclusive and transparent processes. It is only once users have trust in the technology that they are using, that they will feel secure.

While this afternoon we mark the conclusion of the WSIS 10-year review, it should not be seen as end. All stakeholders must renew efforts to build a free and open internet - if not, we are going to lose it.