

**Statement read by Anita Gurumurthy on financing the Information Society by the Association for Progressive Communications, Bread for All, CRIS, Instituto del Tercer Mundo (ITeM), IT for Change, the gender caucus and the Civil Society Financing Working Group
17 February 2005**

We believe that the TFFM was not adequately representative of civil society in its composition, nor sufficiently consultative in its process. Civil society needs a larger role in the ongoing deliberations on developing the WSIS position on financing.

Principles

We believe that the following principles need to form the basis of any discussion on financing the information society.

1. Information and communications and networks are a global public good

We believe that financing the information society should be based on the principle that information and communication is a global public good. This is particularly true for the extension of network infrastructure in developing countries and to all excluded populations everywhere. The value of global information networks increase as more national networks and individual users are added.

2. Centrality of the role of public finance

We recognise that private investment is an unique opportunity on a scale that in many ways is unique to ICD (Information and Communications for Development). However, private investment cannot displace the central role of public finance in a core development area like ICD.

While encouraging the role of private investment in meeting the goals of ICD, the limits of the market in reaching these goals must be recognised.

Public resources need to be mobilised at local, national and international levels.

3. The role of community driven and owned initiatives

The potential of community driven and owned ICD initiatives to contribute to sustainable development and social empowerment, especially women's empowerment, should be explored and integrated into financing strategies.

Recommendations

1. We urge that a commitment to the central role of public resources in implementing the Geneva Plan of Action be included in section 11 of the Political Chapeau, referring to resource mobilisation.

This commitment should also find concrete expression in all sections, of the operational part, especially in chapter 2 concerning financial mechanisms.

2. A specific reference to regional backbone infrastructure in Africa should be added to point c) under paragraph 22 of the Operational Document.

3. Three proposals from conclusion 3 of the TFFM report should be noted in section 24.. These relate to:

- The "Establishment of a 'virtual' financing facility to leverage multiple sources in support of identified investment objectives in key locations"
- The "Creation of a mechanism for coordinating research and analysis into enabling policy environments", and,
- The "Development of a 'rapid response' policy and regulatory support mechanism to intervene in support of short-term ICT policy sector initiatives"

Based on these proposals we recommend the formation of a Global ICD Policy and Financing Facility to:

- assist developing countries utilise existing financial mechanisms for ICD more effectively
- provide policy information, advice and capacity building to developing countries without conditionality
- explore new financial mechanisms to support ICD; mechanisms that avoid diversion of existing funds (e.g. ODA). Such mechanisms could consist of a global tax, voluntary or compulsory, and contributions from commercial internet domain name holders

Such a facility should be established and operated on a multi-stakeholder basis.

We commit to working in active partnership with all other stakeholders in overcoming the challenges of financing an equitable information society.

3. Regarding the DSF we propose that the DSF be endorsed as a targeted fund supporting ICD in cities and towns

It should be:

- governed and operated on a multi-stakeholder basis
- located in Africa
- focus its objectives and the scope of initiatives that it supports
- adopt the principles of free and open source software, open standards and open access