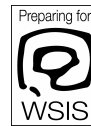




## The WFUNA Task Force on WSIS



# **Report from WSIS 2 PrepCom 1, 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004**

## Background

The first PrepCom of the Tunis phase of WSIS took place June 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> in Hammamet, Tunisia. The official agenda was to plan the future work of the Tunis phase. It was suggested that the future work focus on implementation of the Geneva documents (**draft declaration and action plan**) and on Internet governance and finance mechanisms. Two working groups had been set up on Internet governance and finance **mechanisms**.

CONGO held an information session on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Four people from the Task Force and one from the Danish Network on WSIS participated. The four people included two from UNA-Denmark, one from UNA-Mozambique and one from UNA-Uganda.

During the PrepCom it was planned to hold a Collaboratory with the participants not present in Hammamet in order to get their input and make sure they are more involved. Furthermore it was the purpose to influence the structure of the Civil Society structure and position the Task Force in relation to the discussion in the coming phase.

## The Process

The Hammamet PrepCom turned out to be quite dramatic in the Civil Society arena, which also influenced the governmental negotiations. Apart from taking part in these deliberations the Task Force representatives also participated in the African Caucus, the Education and Academia Caucus and in discussions on creating a working group on telecentres.

The president of the PrepCom met with Civil Society representatives on the night before the PrepCom began and he outlined the rules that applied for CS participation in the process. Civil Society got two speaking slots – on the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> with 15 minutes each day. The Civil Society met for a plenary in the morning and a Content and Themes meeting in the evening.

### *The Task Force Collaboratory*

It had been planned to hold a Task Force collaboratory on the 22<sup>nd</sup> before the meetings started but due to technical problems it was not possible. Instead a collaboratory was scheduled to take place on the 24<sup>th</sup>. UNA-Denmark, UNA-Mozambique, and UNA-Uganda participated from Hammamet. UNA-Venezuela, WFUNA-Geneva, and UNA-Sweden participated virtually along with two people of Cotelco / University of Michigan.

The participants in Hammamet introduced the process so far and then the participants discussed the process and priorities. The discussions and presentations can be seen at [www.](http://www.)

### *Tunisian Influence – the Great Drama*

The main drama of the PrepCom was a result of the Tunisian influence. From the first day there were stories going around about Tunisian organisations, that had not been accredited and reports about a trial days before where two young people were sentenced to prison for accessing certain Internet sites.

The big conflict arose on the second day. The first day had been concluded with the establishment of a temporary working group of interested parties who drafted four interventions for the speaking slot of the 25<sup>th</sup>. In the intervention on human rights the drafting group mentioned Tunisia in its concluding remarks<sup>1</sup> and chose Souhayr Belhassen of the [Tunisian Human Rights League](#) as the speaker.

When, the next morning, the Civil Society statements were to be read the president of the PrepCom instead announced a break. It turned out that some Tunisian NGOs had informed the Tunisian governmental delegation of the CS speaker and the Tunisian delegation had then protested to the PrepCom president. He in turn announced to an emergency CS plenary that Civil Society should sort it out. This resulted in a chaotic day for Civil Society.

Apparently the Tunisian government had brought busses of pro-government NGO representatives<sup>2</sup> to the PrepCom and gotten them accredited although the time limit for accreditation had passed. The pro-government Tunisian NGOs objected to having a statement, which specifically criticised Tunisia in a very negative and persistent language. The large number of Tunisian brought in disrupted the meeting with applause and shouting and the meeting rapidly

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<sup>1</sup> The text was as follows:

“Finally, we are entirely conscious of the fundamental importance of holding WSIS in Tunis, for the people of Tunisia as well as of all the global South countries, and we thus wish its success. However, we wish to reaffirm that it is the duty of the host country of the Summit to show exemplarity, especially in the realization of freedom of expression, of information, of communication, as well as of freedom of association and the right to privacy, during the Tunis process and beyond.”

<sup>2</sup> Out of the 227 NGO representatives on the official list 77 came from NGOs with Tunisian names, and there might be more. Tunisian human rights activists say that only 3 – 4 come from organisations not controlled by the Tunisian government. In the Civil Society plenary of the 25<sup>th</sup> the Tunisians appeared to constitute half of the people present.

deteriorated. One of the critiques was that the CS statement was in English and that the Anglophones dominated Civil Society – truth was, that the statement was in French. Unlike the procedure in former CS meetings they demanded a vote on the subject. In the end a vote was suggested in French only and it was partly carried out as the Tunisians raised their hands but it ended in a shouting match, which ended the meeting. As it was an emergency meeting there were no official interpreters and the participants had to rely on volunteers translating after each speech.

In the evening the pro-governmental Tunisians tried to turn the Content and Themes meeting into a plenary as the plenary of the day was chaired by a Francophone. They did not succeed. Then the conflict of the emergency plenary continued for almost two hours until the interpreters left.

A group of non-pro-Tunisian government NGOs gathered afterwards and decided to write to the president of the PrepCom and explain the situation. A drafting group, which included the representatives of UNA-Denmark, wrote a draft to be discussed the next morning. This turned out to be unnecessary.

The governmental delegations had followed the situation in Civil Society closely. The delegates of the European Union had been very concerned that the Tunisian government had tried to influence Civil Society and repress Civil Society freedom of expression. Therefore the PrepCom president told Civil Society that Ms. Belhassen was allowed by the governmental bureau to speak. She read a slightly changed statement<sup>3</sup> along with the francophone / pro-Tunisian Government choice, a francophone African woman<sup>4</sup>, who read the same statement without the mention of Tunisia.

### *The African Caucus* - To be written by Elsa and Baguma

This caucus held meetings everyday afternoon for about one and a half hours. The meetings discussed three main issues: Financing for Africa Civil Society (ACS), the ACS work plan. The meetings discussed about the structure of the caucus, how to source for additional funds to include more African participation in the WSIS process. One of the issues raised during the discussions was about representativeness of the ACS of the different regions of Africa and the consultation process on different issues of concern for Africa.

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<sup>3</sup> The final remarks read in the final text as follows:

“Finally, we are entirely conscious of the fundamental importance of holding WSIS here and for the people of all the global South countries, and we thus wish its success. However, we wish to reaffirm that it is the duty of the two host countries of the Summit to show exemplarity, especially in the realization of freedom of expression, of information, of communication, as well as of freedom of association and the right to privacy.”

<sup>4</sup> The final remarks in the statement read by Awa N'Diaye are as follows:

“However, we wish to reaffirm that it falls on all the countries of the world to be exemplary, especially in the realization of freedom of expression, of information, of communication, as well as of freedom of association and the right to privacy.”

There will be a regional meeting in Accra, Ghana in February 2005. More information on this caucus can be found at [www.wsis-cs.org/africa](http://www.wsis-cs.org/africa)

### *Other CS groups*

On the plenary mailing list it had been suggested to form a group working with telecentres / community access points. A group of interested parties, including UNA Task Force representatives, met and was decided to invite others to participate on the mailing list before the group is formed. The purpose is to be practical and discuss how community access points can serve the MDGs.

Another group, which the UNA Task Force had been involved in earlier, was the Education and Academia Caucus. It met but it seems that the discussions of the group tend towards the scientific field and away from capacity building, thus being of lesser importance to the task force. Though it was suggested to share information on best practices on concrete projects.

Another caucus, which would be interesting for the Task Force, is the Finance Caucus, but none of the representatives present managed to participate in a meeting. A meeting was scheduled in the Finance Caucus before the conflict arose in Civil Society but it was unclear if it actually took place.

### *The Governmental Negotiations*

The process was influenced by the events taking place in Civil Society as the meeting was delayed due to conflict over the Civil Society speaking slot.

The result of the negotiations<sup>5</sup> was that the agreements of Geneva should not be reopened, and that the outcome of the Tunis Phase should be a document or documents, that reaffirmed the commitments from Geneva and comprised a political and an operational part.

The focus of the Tunis Phase should be:

- Follow-up and implementation of the Geneva documents
- Consideration of the report of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms (TFFM) and appropriate action;
- Consideration of the report of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) and appropriate action;

The preparatory process should be inclusive and includes "relevant thematic, regional and other related meetings". Regional meetings in Latin America (Cuba), Africa (Accra), and

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<sup>5</sup> The decision can be found on <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc1/doc5.doc>. The document also includes a chart, which explains the process.

Western Asia have been mentioned. The regional and thematic meetings will include all stakeholders.

PrepCom 2 takes place 17<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005 in Geneva and PrepCom 3 takes place in September 2005 (supposedly also in Geneva). The Task Force on Financial Mechanism will submit a status report on financing practices for PrepCom 2. The Working Group on Internet Governance will submit a suggestion for PrepCom 3

A “group of friends” of the President of the PrepCom, with the assistance of the WSIS Executive Secretariat and in consultation with regional groups, will prepare a document to serve as a basis for negotiations in PrepCom 2. How the group of friends will be put together is unclear, but Civil Society in Hammamet was interested in making sure that Civil Society will be represented in the group.

#### *Going ahead from Hammamet*

It was agreed to hold a collaboratory within the Task Force before too long.

The African members of the Task Force will continue to participate in the African Caucus.

The issues of the financing caucus is of importance and the Task Force need to devote some attention to it.