



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **UN General Assembly's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10) Review fails to address the need for Peace in the cyberspace**

On December 16, 2015 the UN General Assembly issued an outcome document for its review of implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). WSIS, which was the international community's initial effort at articulating its vision for a society driven by information and communications technology (ICT), concluded its final phase in 2005. The current meeting therefore represented the views of UN member states on what the last decade of follow-up of WSIS signified for the health of the "information society" and its future prospects.

As could be expected for such a complex undertaking the outcome document revealed a mixed record on implementation. On one hand the growth of the Internet (and other forms of ICT) has been phenomenal. By the end of 2015, 3.2 billion people are expected to be online, a threefold increase from 2005. Moreover of these users a majority (2 billion) now resides in developing countries. Mobile (and increasingly smart) phones have had even greater growth from 2 to 7 billion subscriptions.

This impressive increase in users eclipses however the slow development of the governance and other standards that have failed to keep pace with the spread of the technology. Too often in the outcome document one encounters a reaffirmation of key elements of WSIS (e.g. on internet governance, bridging the digital divide, multi-stakeholder cooperation) without the elaboration of how these aims have been progressed over the last decade or guidance on how they should be developed in future.

We welcome the attention devoted to human rights in the document, including the reaffirmation of UNGA and Human Rights Council resolutions asserting that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online". If this belief is ever to be more than just a slogan however it will require strict implementation and robust oversight. Pleas for states to respect the independence of the media and to uphold the right to privacy will ring hollow in the absence of meaningful action to safeguard these rights in practice.

The most striking omission in the outcome document was any reference to a peaceful cyberspace, a precondition for realizing the varied goals of WSIS. One searches in vain in the document for a mention of the word “peace” despite the fact that paragraph 36 of the *Tunis Commitment* recognized the importance of conflict prevention and the role of ICT in enabling the UN’s peacekeeping and peacemaking functions. The document refers to “the leading role for governments in cyber security matters relating to national security” without any acknowledgment of their responsibility for maintaining global cyber peace and security. Other stakeholders will have to redouble their efforts to ensure that irresponsible state conduct in cyberspace is not allowed to compromise this unique environment. Such state action if left unchecked could endanger the WSIS vision and a peaceful cyberspace.

Contact:

Daniel Stauffacher

[danielstauffacher@ict4peace.org](mailto:danielstauffacher@ict4peace.org)

[www,ict4peace.org](http://www,ict4peace.org)

New York, 17 December 2015