

Mr. Chairman,

I take the floor to briefly bring to the attention of this WSIS PrepCom of the meeting held a few days ago in Malta and which meeting has a bearing on one of the important themes of WSIS, that is Internet Governance.

The International Conference on Multistakeholder Diplomacy was held in Malta between 11th and 13th of February. It was co-organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Global Knowledge Partnership and the Diplo Foundation.

The main objective of the Conference was to discuss the Multistakeholder approach in modern diplomacy and the way forward for addressing complex Internet Governance issues, with particular focus on the role and impact of various stakeholders in the WSIS process.

During the three-day meeting, particular emphasis was laid on analysing the multi-disciplinary aspects of governance as it relates to the Multistakeholder processes including procedure, intercultural communication, and legal frameworks, as well as the experiences gained from UN Conferences, including the Geneva phase of WSIS.

An important feature of The Malta Conference was the involvement in the Conference of Governments, experienced and up-coming diplomats, civil society activists, international organisations, representatives of the business

sector, academia, the media as well as researchers and interns and other players in the field of Internet Governance – a truly Multistakeholder Forum.

It is of particular satisfaction to note that more than half of the participants came from developing countries from all continents, mostly, if not all, sponsored by the four organizers of the Conference. The presence of these participants in the Conference enabled all concerned to take an in-depth look at, among other things, the inter-related issues of Internet Governance and the search for poverty reduction, the destabilising factors of intra-state conflicts, and the role of non-state actors.

It is therefore of no surprise that the Malta Multistakeholder Conference produced a rich and lively exchange among the participants with particular focus being given to how the Geneva and Tunis WSIS process could benefit from Multistakeholder diplomacy by providing policy and practical recommendations including follow-up to the Tunis Summit.

In their Conclusions, the participants at the International Conference, among other things:

- Emphasized the value of the Multistakeholder approach and the need to raise awareness about the positive results of organisations that already use a Multistakeholder approach in their work.
- Shared the conviction that the involvement of all stakeholders is not intended to replace, but to complement and broaden traditional international relations conducted by sovereign states.

- Highlighted the importance of the Multistakeholder approach as a channel for vertical communication among different layers of decision-making and implementation (local-national-regional-global).
- Invited all stakeholders to use their creativity and resources to establish new forms of dialogue and partnership among themselves, beyond the traditional intergovernmental framework, even after the end of the WSIS process, so as to make sure that the objectives of the Information Society will continue to be on their active agenda.
- Strongly recommended the introduction of a multistakeholder follow-up process to WSIS, building on the lessons and methodologies of the WGIG.
- Invited Governments, that have not yet done so, to introduce Multistakeholder National Information Society Dialogues as they pledged in the Geneva WSIS Plan of Action (para. C1 8b). In this context, Participants to the Malta Conference invited all Governments to set-up, before the second phase of WSIS in Tunis, national Multistakeholder Information Society frameworks in order to provide a fora for debating policy issues and promoting partnerships.

Mr. Chairman,

The Maltese Government, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Global Knowledge Partnership and the Diplo Foundation, have together succeeded to deal with a theme that has perhaps escaped the attention of delegations in the processes leading to the Geneva phase of the WSIS, even though it was always omnipresent and will continue to be present in the future. It is for the Multistakeholder to make the best use of Diplomacy, in bridging the digital divide and thus contribute to the economic and social development of our countries. The experiences gained from and the Conclusions of the Malta Conference should be seen as a valid contribution towards this end.

Thank you.