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**The overall review of WSIS
and its implications to the implementation of
and follow-up to the Summit outcomes**

Statement submitted by

Mr. Davis Souter

Managing Director, ict Development Associates

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REMARKS CONCERNING THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY FOLLOWING THE WSIS+10 REVIEW

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DAVID SOUTER - MANAGING DIRECTOR, ICT DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES AND VISITING SENIOR FELLOW, DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS & POLITICAL SCIENCE

I've spent a great deal of the past fifteen years on WSIS, from the first PrepCom in 2001 to the General Assembly's review last month, including work with CSTD on its five and ten year reviews, and with the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, the ITU and UNESCO on aspects of their WSIS reviews.

In the few minutes I have available, I'll try to summarise what I think about the Summit's impact, its relevance and future focus.

Where has the Summit made a difference? I'd stress three things.

First, it built awareness of the potential of ICTs for development - particularly in developing country governments. Nevertheless, I think there's still a paradigm gap between ICT4D and other development policy domains. This was evident in the limited treatment of ICTs in the Sustainable Development Goals, and it's evident in a gap between the ICT sector's aspirations and the realities of development contexts on the ground. It needs to be addressed, not least by the ICT sector gaining better understanding of development.

Second, WSIS made Internet governance more prominent. Partly that's because the Internet itself is now much more important than it used to be, not just for us but in every aspect of economy, society and culture. And there are unresolved issues - both old and new issues - in this field.

And third, it introduced a new model of multistakeholder cooperation and dialogue. This has enabled policy development to be better informed and more inclusive. However, much about it, too, is still unresolved, in the relationship between multilateral and multistakeholder institutions, but also in creating models of participation that reach beyond coalitions of like-minded people.

Let me turn to relevance. I'll distinguish here between the WSIS vision and principles, and the detailed outcomes that were set at WSIS. The vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society is still central, as the General Assembly made clear. But the targets set in 2003 were already out of date in 2010. And while the Action Lines are valuable, the main action has been elsewhere, in other fora, the work of many different organisations, governments and businesses, and the ways that people have appropriated ICTs for their own ends.

The most important chapter in the CSTD secretariat's ten-year review is that which talks about how the Information Society has changed since WSIS - that ICTs are now thirty times more capable; that much of what is central to today's Information Society - mobile broadband, smartphones, social media, cloud computing - was not on the agenda when the Summit happened. We need

benchmarks, indicators and targets that are relevant to today's Information Society, not yesterday's.

And we need to look at the impact of ICTs on today's societies. I've argued elsewhere that what matters most is the way adoption of ICTs has altered underlying parameters of economy, society and culture, government's relationships with citizens and our relationships with one another.

This underlying impact is more important than individual technologies or applications, and it varies substantially between countries. It has important implications for a key conclusion of the recent review, that there should be stronger integration between ICTs and SDGs. That isn't just a matter of finding clever ways of using ICTs to achieve SDG targets; it's about understanding and leveraging the underlying holistic changes that ICTs are making in diverse economies and social structures.

So to the future. The General Assembly decided to hold another High Level Meeting on WSIS outcomes in 2025. What does that imply?

If there have been massive changes in technology in the last ten years, there will be greater changes in the next. It's highly likely that the Internet of Things, algorithmic decision-making and artificial intelligence will have greater transformative effects on economies, societies and cultures in industrial countries in the next ten years than broadband, mobility and social networking had in the last decade. But that is much less likely to be true of some other countries, especially LDCs.

As we recognised yesterday, many people are enthusiastic and optimistic about these changes. They believe ICTs will enable us to do much more, more efficiently, to the benefit of all. But, as we also recognised yesterday, the problems and the uncertainties of innovation need to be just as central to our thinking as the opportunities. We need to address anxieties as well as excitement about the future.

And, as a number of people emphasised yesterday, there is a risk that we will spend too much time thinking about tomorrow's opportunities before we've dealt with the constraints that limit what we can do with today's.

I'll end by suggesting four things that we should keep in mind in the post-WSIS+10 environment.

First, ICTs are not inherently egalitarian. There is evidence that LDCs are falling behind other countries. Within countries, ICTs can simultaneously empower people, by increasing access to information, and disempower them, because others derive greater benefit than they do. We need to monitor digital marginalisation, and respond appropriately.

Second, ICTs are not inherently benign. They are just as valuable to criminals as saints, for waging war as making peace, for surveillance as empowerment. We don't know yet what the long-term impact on our lives will be of some of today's innovations, let alone artificial intelligence and datafication. We need to monitor their impact, and respond appropriately.

Third, the pace of change is so fast that policy and regulatory structures can't keep up. Changes take place in technology and impact before we can understand what's happening or influence them in the direction of outcomes

that we'd choose. We need to think now about what policy and regulatory approaches are appropriate for such a rapidly changing environment.

Lastly, we need to anticipate the Information Society that will emerge by 2025. There is a definite role here, I think, for CSTD: to keep a clear eye on what is changing and what's unchanging, especially what wasn't in the WSIS outcome documents or those from the WSIS+10 review. To keep an eye, in other words, on what will determine the character of the Information Society that we'll review in ten years' time. And to make sure that technological innovations and the impact of ICTs on economy, society and culture are better understood throughout the UN system.