



**WSIS
FORUM**

**25-29
MAY 2015**
Geneva
Switzerland

WSIS C10 Action Line: Making the Link – Information Ethics for Sustainable Development

Organizer: UNESCO

Session duration: 90 minutes

Format: Expert panel with interactive audience Q&A

Venue: Popov Room (Room B)

Dates & times: 16:45 – 18:15, Thursday 28 May, 2015

Session Goals

This Facilitation Meeting will focus on identifying and developing awareness around contributions and interventions that the C10 Action Line, the ethical dimensions of the information society, can advance in support of the sustainable development goals. The event will bring together a global panel of educators, policy-makers, researcher, civil society and private sector actors to share experiences and contribute to shaping the Action Line's future work streams.

Background

The effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) can significantly contribute to the attainment of a wide cross-section of sustainable development goals (SDG) and create conditions for the realization of human rights. From this perspective, an ethical imperative arises for the creation of systems and enabling environments that allow for meaningful participation and representation within the on-line spaces.

Currently, only some 42% of the world's population has access to the Internet. There is an urgent need to address this gap, but also to give attention to other specific ICT issues beyond connectivity, such as relevant content and user capabilities amongst others. We need to address both hard and soft factors in order to achieve full participation, build capacities and enhance the potential for positive outcomes by all.

While the Internet and virtual spaces provide greater opportunities for expression by the previously marginalized, this potential may not necessarily result in their voices being heard amidst the cacophony of competing noises. Online processes offer possibilities for shifting governance and decision-making from a top down mode to one capable of coalescing and integrating bottom-up views to achieve an informed consensus that reflects broad-based societal concerns and consensus. Nevertheless participatory governance depends on the information and

knowledge that people have, as well as their ability to use it, to prioritize, as well as to give attention to and distill the important from background distractions.

To address the foregoing challenges interventions are needed in the areas of education and policy making:

- Education aimed at the development of skills relevant to self-expression, the critical analysis and use of content as well as civil user interaction within the seamless glocal on-line context takes on a heightened role in ensuring effective participation. There is also a need for users to develop a greater capacity for self-awareness and reflexivity around the direct and indirect consequences of their actions.
- Policy-maker play an important role in the evolution of the socio-technical interplay on-line and their influence on user choices, interactions and broader social transformation. However, policy-makers need to recognize and make explicit to themselves and others the ethical content embedded in their choices. Unless policy-makers can understand, position and articulate within their “technical decision-making” processes values such as “contributing to enabling all persons to freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, enjoying the arts and sharing in scientific advancement and its benefits”, the full potential of ICT for sustainable development will not be realized.

It is expected that the reflections from panelist and the audience will identify some concrete measures around policy and education that UNESCO and partners can undertake in the post-2015 WSIS phase.

Participants

Professor Roni Aviram, Ben Gurion University of the Nagev
Ms Leyla Bartet, Permanent Delegation of Peru to UNESCO
Mr Amouzou Bedi, Knowledge for Development without Borders
Youth Civil Society Representative (tbc)

Organizers

John Crowley, UNESCO
Paul Hector, UNESCO