



PrepCom 3 Resumed Session was from September 10-14 2003 and the PrepCom 3 was from September 10-26 2003 in Geneva.

September 26, 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Greetings Friends,

In the morning Plenary meeting today, the last day of the PrepCom, the group took stock of where we are with the two documents. The draft Declaration of Principles, with many square brackets, has been forwarded to the Plenary with a recommendation that it be considered as the basis for final negotiations. The draft Plan of Action has also been forwarded with that recommendation, noting that only the Introduction; Objectives, goals and targets; International and regional cooperation (C11); and Follow-up and evaluation (E) have been agreed to (with some square brackets), and the Action Lines, Digital Solidarity Agenda, and Towards WSIS phase 2 (Tunis) have a different status. Sub-Committee 2 did not review and discuss the latter--they come only from the work that happened in ad hoc groups.

The draft Plan of Action parts that have been approved include two phrases with square brackets, both in the Introduction. One refers to the role of media as a stakeholder in the Information Society, and the other to actions needing to take into account human rights standards and gender equality. Most objections to the latter paragraph concerned the way in which human rights were referred to.

When arriving at discussion in the Plenary of the Declaration, the President urged that Plenary be suspended to take up again the issue of the Declaration, and to move back into the Sub-Committee 2 working group. Plenary was planned to resume at 3:00, then 4:00, then 4:30, and finally at 5:15 Plenary began again. There has been some confusion around what to do with this document, since the document that delegates have in their hands does not include the inputs from negotiations today or last night, and delegates are resisting adopting a document that does not have a record of this work—very understandable given that the document had to be distributed first thing in the morning.

The Bureau proposed a continuation of PrepCom 3, subject to the availability of financial resources, on November 10-14 and December 7-9. Discussion continued with a proposal from the African Regional to meet only once, for a week, prior to the official summit, because of many countries' financial limitations. And debate continued until 8:30 p.m. on different options and views on those. In the end, the plenary finally accepted the original proposal to meet November 10-14, with another meeting in December undecided.

It has been a pleasure to share what information I have been able to during this interesting process. Health and good fortune to you all!

Sundra
Gender Caucus Advocacy and Lobbying Specialist

September 25 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Dear Friends,

A new working draft of the Plan of Action was produced last night and distributed in English. The chair is pressing governments to understand the need to have at least one of the documents mostly agreed today to present to the Plenary on Friday. So he is trying to move fairly quickly through the new draft seeking approval on everything possible, with agreement to forward what can't be agreed upon in brackets. He is strongly discouraging any additional text. In his summary this morning, he stated that there are 143 actions contained, 19 of which are in brackets, and 10 of those in the financing section. It's not so bad when looked at like that!

This morning Sub-Committee 2 moved through the Introduction and part of the Objectives, not managing to reduce the number of brackets, but agreeing to add some text that had consensus. Samples of those were to make mention of overcoming the Digital Divide in Para 1, to mention the private sector's role in a wider sustainable development context in 3b, and to add Monterey Consensus language around International AND REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS playing a role in integrating ICTs into the development process.

A new paragraph referring to actions needing to take into account human rights standards and gender equality had a lot of discussion, mostly on the human rights aspects. But since consensus looked impossible, that paragraph is being forwarded with brackets to the full Plenary.

There is a special meeting called for 5:00 p.m. this afternoon for heads of delegations with only one advisor, regarding the Declaration. I'm sure there will be some news regarding that later on today. There is so much disagreement on the Declaration, that I would guess that they are giving up thinking that it can be basically agreed upon by the end of tomorrow. So we may get confirmation of the rumors about additional negotiating sessions before the December summit. That's all for now!

Warm regards,

Sundra Flansburg
Advocacy and Lobbying Specialist

September 24 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Greetings all,

It has been another day of working through the existing draft of the Declaration to try and establish agreement on at least some paragraphs--this in the Sub-Committee 2 working group. The delegates are trying to reduce substantially the number of square brackets in the documents. Though it will move forward completely in square brackets, there continue to be contentious points that are bracketed even within the big square brackets. Delegations are feeling the fact that Friday will be the last day of this PrepCom, which is only two short days away.

The new Plan of Action is still being discussed in ad hoc groups addressing different sections. We are hearing rumors of an Inter-Sessional to be scheduled in October, followed by a fourth PrepCom the week prior to the December Summit.

There was a brief skirmish over what was supposed to be an accepted new paragraph based on the NGO Gender Working Strategies Group proposal, which was distributed and lobbied by the Gender Caucus. While attempting to move ahead with referring this text without square brackets, Egypt stated that they would prefer to remove "all" in the sentence "We are committed to ensuring that the information society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in ALL spheres of society and in ALL decision-making processes." The U.S. then proposed reverting to the original text that was in Paragraph 9 (which was much weaker in our opinion). The EU then stated that they felt the original text would "enrich" the present one. Fortunately, Canada and New Zealand spoke in favor of the new text, simply deleting the second appearance of "in all," which would not change the meaning. It is moving forward to Sub-Committee 2 with only the change suggested by Canada and New Zealand--and Egypt and the others eventually supported that. So we are safe until it comes up again in full Sub-Committee 2.

The revised working draft has some "interesting" new additions. An addition to Paragraph 3 states "The information society shall take fully into account the requirements of ethics and morality and shall accord the wider possible protection and assistance to the family which is the natural and most fundamental unity of our society." Egypt opposed deleting it, and it appears to be moving forward in brackets. Another new sentence was deleted: "The family, in all its cultural and organizational diversity, ensures, together with schools and media, the socialisation of future generations."

The EU proposed replacing "the elderly" with "older people," but quickly backed down when the chair of the working group stated that she thought that "the elderly" was more correct in English. On Paragraph 18 on monitoring and evaluation, Thailand proposed to add gender-disaggregated data to the paragraph, but the chair did not record that when summarizing the inputs, and the paragraph has moved forward without that addition.

Best wishes,

Sundra
Advocacy and Lobbying Specialist

September 23 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Dear colleagues,

This has been long and busy day of working paragraph by paragraph through the Declaration of Principles, and in ad hoc groups on sections of the Plan of Action. We attended the ad hoc group on "Access to Information" in the Plan of Action, making observations on the importance of gender sensitivity in several of the actions described. Small delegations have been stretched very thin with concurrent working groups running, and even larger ones are having troubles keeping up with the many meetings in different parts of the building. Meetings are scheduled until 10:00 p.m., with the "note" that at this point it is expected that delegations must stay tonight until all of the Declaration text is worked through.

We met with two of the Canadian delegation this morning for some input—a very good meeting as this delegation is skilled at strategic planning. One of the actions they are following through with today is to ensure that Paragraph 9 is included in the new draft in the way that the Gender Caucus basically proposed it, Canada presented, and other governments supported. We have also met briefly with Panama, the U.S., India, El Salvador and some other government representatives today to share our request for a new paragraph in the Plan of Action.

Negotiations struggle on, and we expect to see another working text for the Declaration tomorrow.

Best regards,

Sundra
Advocacy and Lobbying Specialist

September 22 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Hello all,

It has been a busy day—officially, negotiations have begun! The Draft Declaration of Principles was distributed late on Friday. That fact produced a lot of action over the weekend and early Monday on the part of Civil Society. On the part of the Gender Caucus, we were alarmed at the loss of much of the language around gender that was in the Draft following the Inter-sessional. The document is much shorter, but there seems to be an underlying assumption that by saying "all people" and the like, automatically makes the document equitable and promote the engagement of all groups. Our advocacy strategy has changed somewhat to focus on a key paragraph on gender in this document. The current paragraph is very weak and badly put, in our opinion, and we have proposed a replacement paragraph that was written by the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group. By the end of the day, after much quick and direct lobbying with the delegates in the morning and early afternoon on the part of the Gender Caucus, we were delighted when Canada, New Zealand, Jamaica, Malaysia, the U.S., and the European Union stated in Sub-Committee 2 that the Gender Caucus language was better than the working draft, and proposed using that language with a word change. Apart from an encouraging advance from the morning, this is an important lesson in keeping hope and motivation even when there are set-backs.

The revised Draft Plan of Action was also put on line and later distributed today. Again, it is more condensed and shows a general lack of attention to many of the Civil Society points that were raised during the last week, and before the PrepCom. We are distributing a lobbying sheet today urging governments to insert a new paragraph in the introduction to the Action Lines that states the importance of a gender awareness as a foundation to actions, including in design, monitoring, and evaluating actions. Our work this week must be targeted and clear, that is certain.

Until tomorrow,

Sundra

September 19 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Hello colleagues and friends!

Sub-Committee 2 moved efficiently and quickly through the last section of the Plan of Action this morning on financing and implementation. There was support and opposition expressed on creation of a new Digital Solidarity Fund, and some compromise language suggested. In particular, New Zealand said they were very cautious about the creation of a new fund, and perhaps there should be more focus on improving the effectiveness of existing funds. But if there were a new fund created, it should be voluntary. Other delegations are saying that there should be a new fund, specifically Barbados, but that it should be voluntary. The EU had detailed language, which they are submitting in writing, opposing a new fund. Briefly, they want no new fund, and state that financing should be within the framework of the Monterey Consensus (the US echoes this call). International development corporations and bi- and multi-lateral funds should adjust their policies to be in line with WSIS. They stated that since private sector funds are the majority of flows now, the private sector should be an integral part of funding expectations. Where local conditions are not attractive to private investment, then public funding, including national and regional funding, should be used as starting funds to jump-start ICT investment. Public-private partnerships should be the goal in ICT investment. So lots of debate around this issue, and to add to the mix, there is a working group chaired by Sweden that is meeting to address specifically the issues around funding, and report back to Sub-Committee 2.

Also in relation to funding, there have been several contributions, from Zimbabwe and Algeria, suggesting that debt relief and consolidation language should be merged with funding language, saying that in relieving debt then countries should invest these funds in ICT infrastructure.

Procedures for continuing were shared by the Chair. Sub-Committee 2 is now finished for the day. Sub-Committee 1 (Procedures) will meet at the end of the morning for a half-hour to discuss the new document that has been distributed. A revised draft of the Declaration is to be distributed by 15:00 today. Over the weekend, the Chair, assisted by the Secretariat, will work on producing a revised Plan of Action. The points he mentioned that he plans to focus on are the following:

The **Introduction** needs quite a lot of reworking, and the roles of stakeholders will be much more general than what is in the current draft, since they vary so by country. The **Objectives** also need work, connecting them to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He acknowledged that they are now very linked to technology, and not comprehensive enough. The **Indicative Targets** he noted are going to be very difficult, but his strategy will be to make them guiding, and with reference to different levels of development, noting that they could be used as a reference for the development of national targets. **Action Lines** will be reordered somewhat to reflect comments and discussion in working groups regarding the Declaration. He indicated that comments generally stated that they should be of a policy nature, and should promote development goals.

On Monday, Sub-Committee 2 will convene again to discuss the revised Declaration. So that is the focus starting Monday again. On Monday, the revised draft of the Plan of Action will be distributed in English, and translation work will begin to get it into the official languages as quickly as possible. Discussion on the Plan will resume in Sub-Committee 2 on Tuesday.

In closing Sub-Committee 2, both Romania and Switzerland commented publicly that they were very pleased with the Civil Society contributions to committee work. They felt that the comments were very helpful and supported continuation of this revised format for Civil Society observations-and thanked Civil Society.

This has been a long update, but a very busy morning. We will share news about the new documents we will be receiving shortly - and wish everyone the best!

Sundra
Advocacy & Lobbying Specialist

September 18 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Hello all,

On Day 4 of PrepCom 3, the goal in Sub-Committee 2 was to work completely through the rest of the Plan of Action, receiving different delegation's comments on specific clusters of paragraphs. They didn't make it completely through, but did make it to the final paragraphs (Paras 44-48) on financing and monitoring-rather impressive since there was a lot of ground to cover. I must say that the chair is very good-respectful and welcoming but firm. The final paragraphs will be taken up on Friday.

The civil society and business comments were heard on Para 48 at the end of today-not a great time, when delegates are tired and wanting a break. I'm guessing that there will be some lively comments on this last section, since many countries have already made their positions on a new, earmarked fund known.

It was decided that the financing language was still very much undecided, and a new working group on that subject was to be established, chaired by Sweden. Delegates were requested not to comment specifically on that issue.

Today, Kenya has made several interventions which included reference to targeting educational opportunities around ICTs to girls, and to include gender measures in several of the initiatives proposed. Malaysia mentioned something related to Internet content and pornography, and the way in which that was abusive to women in particular.

So far I've met with one of the Costa Rican delegates today, who was supportive of technology convergence, but noncommittal on our other points. Two of the Congo delegation had picked up some of our Gender Caucus literature. When meeting with them, while not overly enthusiastic, were generally supportive. The head of the Indian delegation has been very cordial over the last few days, and reiterated their support for gender equality.

The NGO Gender Strategies Working Group had a good meeting today, at which we shared information and discussed strategies. Their participation in Civil Society statements today was excellent.

As we've had several days of plowing through documents section by section, it feels like there is a bit of a sense of tiredness, which I can understand. Three-hour meetings in which one delegation after another gets up to read statements take a lot of concentration!

Warm regards,
Sundra
Advocacy & Lobbying Specialist

September 17 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Hello everyone,

We continue to be hard at work. The Official Plenary has moved on to the Plan of Action today. We're hearing comments on the first 10 paragraphs as I write. Yesterday, formal interventions were heard on the remaining parts of the Declaration.

Based on Gillian Goddard's work with Caribbean delegations, we were delighted that the Jamaican delegate proposed to the Declaration language similar to ours around the importance of integrating traditional and new technologies. Barbados then supported that invention. In addition, the Indian delegation made a strong statement indicating that when work was being done to condense and streamline the Declaration, that several key issues be retained as central elements. Two of these were the Millennium Development Goals and gender equality.

In addition to Caribbean delegations (including Trinidad and Tobago), we have met briefly with representatives of the following delegations: India, South Africa (thanks Susan!), Suriname, Sweden, Finland, Canada, the U.S., Malaysia, and El Salvador. The latter two were generally supported of our message regarding convergence of traditional/old and new ICTs, but weren't receptive to our other priorities. Does anyone on the list have any mechanism for working from your end with these delegations?

The comments today so far (it's nearing noon) are, as you might imagine, varied. Brazil sticks out as strongly pushing the need to build on the Millennium Development Goals. The EU and Canada also said that the Millennium Development Goals should form the basis for action. Both also stated that language throughout the Plan on gender equality should be strengthened.

One of the contentious points, again, as you might imagine, is the Digital Solidarity Fund. Several have said that a main point against it is the lack of definition on who controls the fund, how decisions would be made, and what priorities it would address. Some of those coming out against it are Canada, U.S., EU, and Japan. UNESCO also is against it. All say that there are existing funds are available and should be redirected.

That's all for today!

Sundra
Advocacy & Lobbying Specialist

September 16 2003, Advocacy Update from PrepCom 3

Cheers from Geneva everyone!

As you have already heard, we had a very successful Orientation Session on Saturday, and were able to bring some of the results from that workshop into the first day of the PrepCom on Monday.

Since much of Monday was dedicated to welcomes, updates, and procedures, I don't have much to share in terms of substance. One thing to mention is that the format for Civil Society participation in the delegate plenaries has been changed for the better. Rather than Civil Society having only 5 minutes at the beginning of the day to speak, they are now given 5 minutes before each section of discussion. Most of us think that this is a good step forward, since by doing so there is more chance for Civil Society to speak, and the interventions can be more focused on the section that is coming up for negotiations. As I write on Tuesday morning, there have been reminders to longer speakers that the agreement to expand contributions is contingent on respecting these very short timeframes.

Apart from that, I will just share some "color." Personally, I have been delighted to put some faces to the names that I have been reading on our electronic discussion list. As you have heard already, the T-shirt with the missing paragraph is a big hit. There was a nice reception following sessions, which was hosted by the Swiss Consul, the Consul of the Canton of Geneva, and the Administrative Consul of the Town of Geneva.

That's all for now.

Regards,
Sundra
Advocacy & Lobbying Specialist