



Global Alliance for ICT & Development
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
(UNDESA-GAID)

Open Consultations Summary
Geneva, Switzerland
23 February 2009

Highlights of discussions

Chairing the session, **Mr. Houlin Zhao**, Deputy Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), welcomed participants to the consultation, which he said was a continuation from the previous year's edition. He noted that many issues had already been addressed then and during the preceding online discussions, and progress had been accomplished in implementing ensuing recommendations. As a multi-stakeholder platform, UNDESA-GAID has made great strides towards mainstreaming ICT for Development (ICT4D) into the international development agenda. Mr. Zhao commended the Secretariat for its efforts to bring all partners together. He urged the Alliance to further enhance the participation of the civil society and strengthen the relationship with the private sector. Mr. Zhao stated that UNDESA-GAID needs a clear substantive focus, and he warned against duplication of efforts. With only six years remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and still much work to be done, Mr. Zhao called on the ICT for Development stakeholder community to be more ambitious and continue working together on concrete actions to implement the clear vision from the World Summit on the Information Society. Mr. Zhao also reaffirmed ITU's support for UNDESA-GAID and its commitment to continue serving as an active player in UNDESA-GAID and as a member of the Steering Committee.

Following Mr. Zhao's introduction, **Mr. Sarbuland Khan**, Executive Coordinator of UNDESA-GAID, expressed his appreciation to ITU for its support for GAID and for hosting the consultation. He also thanked Mr. William Drake for leading the online discussions and moderating the consultation. He invited participants not to go over the same issues again but to focus on practical recommendations that can be implemented. He indicated that the Alliance had achieved significant progress during the past year, notably with the redesign and launch of its website to serve as a platform for community dialogue and information sharing. He invited the community to make use of the website. However, much work remains to be done to enhance communication and implement a much more dynamic process to discuss GAID activities and plans. Mr. Khan stressed that it should be a two-way process, as the larger community needs to engage more actively and the Secretariat also needs feedback from the community.

Before opening the floor for comments, the moderator, **Mr. William Drake**, presented a brief background on the online discussions that led to the consultations. He conveyed the need from the stakeholder community to have a better sense of what is happening in GAID, how to get involved and how to assess progress.

Communications and transparency within UNDESA-GAID

Mr. Yury Grin (ITU) congratulated the GAID Secretariat for its achievements to date. He underscored the importance of the Alliance's mandate to provide policy advice on ICT for Development to the United Nations Secretary-General, which he identified as an area where communications could be further strengthened.

Ms. Ayesha Hassan (ICC) raised the issue of the flow, and overflow, of information. She noted that too much information does not equal transparency and she warned against excessive emphasis on online discussions. As solution, she proposed that the Secretariat communicates periodically to the stakeholders on ongoing activities, in the form for example of monthly highlights. Acknowledging the limited resources of the Secretariat, she called on members of the Strategy Council to take their responsibilities seriously in helping move GAID forward.

Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh (IT for Change), in his intervention, called for a review of the governing structure of UNDESA-GAID. He stressed that participation is as important as communication and transparency, therefore, there should be more emphasis on getting people to know each other and building trust. This point was supported by Ms. Renate Bloem and Amb. Yrjo Lansipuro. Mr. Singh, supported by Amb. Lansipuro, called for more involvement of the Strategy Council in the planning and organization of GAID activities. He also asked the Secretariat to be more responsive to requests from the stakeholders.

Ms. Renate Bloem, supported by Mr. Hellmonds, further noted that the Steering Committee and the Strategy Council usually do not have enough time to discuss among themselves the strategic focus of GAID. She also supported Mr. Zhao's suggestion to involve the civil society more.

Mr. Peter Hellmonds (Nokia Siemens Networks) stressed that a better job should be done in communicating relevant information to members. He challenged members of the GAID bodies to better organize themselves in a way that is effective and meaningful. In this regard, he proposed that working groups be set-up to take the lead on specific focus areas and act as intermediaries in assisting the Secretariat in improving the information flows to those interested on the issues. Ms. Viola Krebs raised the issue of the selection of the topics on which the working groups should focus.

Mr. Sanjay Singhal (Sintel Satellite Services) proposed to make use of the website as a tool not only to inform stakeholders but also to get feedback from them. **Mr. Jean Pouly** (Digital Solidarity Agency) expressed his appreciation for the social network that has been launched for GAID stakeholders and he further advocated for the use of such platforms for interaction, discussions and sharing of knowledge.

Ms. Viola Krebs (ICVolunteers) urged to strengthen synergies between the various processes involved in the WSIS follow-up process.

Mr. Wolfgang Kleinwaechter further expanded on the need for a greater focus in the role of GAID in the WSIS follow-up process, stating the initial vision of GAID to promote high-level multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration in the field of ICT for Development. He particularly presented the example of the *“UN Meets Silicon Valley”* as an instance of such

dialogue. He reassured that stakeholders are willing to contribute provided that there is a concrete focus to the activities of GAID.

After a brief summary of the discussion, the moderator opened the floor for the next two items on the agenda, given the limited remaining time.

Work programme and substantive focus – Partnerships and institutional relationships

Mr. Grin underscored the strength of GAID as easily accessible to the civil society. As the civil society plays a very important role in influencing governments on the importance of ICT for Development, he urged GAID to further enhance its support for the participation of the civil society in its activities. Ambassador de la Chapelle warned against viewing GAID as a silo for civil society. He stressed that all organizations and processes should open up to relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Parminder stated that GAID should demonstrate the power of ICT as it positively affects outcomes on the ground. He noted that there is a clear opportunity for GAID to promote the role of ICT in the development agenda, as other organizations are downscaling their efforts in that area. He also advocated for more inclusion of developing countries participants in GAID. As a possible topic for GAID, he proposed that the Alliance focuses on broadband policies for developing countries, looking beyond pure connectivity into what broadband can do for developing countries.

Amb. Bertrand de la Chapelle (France) expressed his view that the Alliance should focus neither on policy discussion nor on implementation. Rather, it should bring together communities not yet connected to one another, the ICT community and the development community. In doing so, the alliance should focus on ICT applications for development. He urged to take advantage of the May cluster of events to enhance cooperation between GAID, CSTD, ITU, UNESCO, UNGIS, IGF and other entities involved in WSIS follow-up, hereby reducing the need for numerous travels to various events around the world dealing with the same issues.

Amb. Lansipuro disagreed, and restated the need for a high-level platform for policy dialogue. In this regard, he recognized the great convening power of GAID, which must be put to a more focused use.

Mr. Brad Kane (ICWFD) suggested that GAID stakeholders be empowered to take the lead on implementing initiatives and bring together other members to contribute on specific topics at the regional level, while recognizing that GAID itself does not have an implementation mandate.

Mr. Hellmonds stated that if GAID didn't exist, it would need to be invented, as it plays a critical role as a discussion forum on ICT for development issues. He called for a focus on the core mission and vision of GAID, within the limits of resource constraints, to bring policy dialogue in a non-duplicating way, as an added-value to other ICT for Development processes and as a contribution to CSTD.

Summarizing the discussions, Mr. Drake noted that there was no other place within the United Nations for multi-stakeholder dialogue on ICT for Development. He recalled that it was part of the initial role envisioned for GAID. He called for further discussion to continue online.

In closing comments, Mr. Khan stated that the core issue was to focus GAID on ICT for Development policy issues in a way that is useful, practical and result-oriented. He underscored the efforts already made to link ICT and development in the contexts of CSTD, ECOSOC and the General Assembly. But the task is vast. He invited the community to get engaged in making it happen and identified several upcoming opportunities for further linking ICT with the United Nations Development Agenda (CSTD, ECOSOC, GAID Global Forum, MDG Summit in 2010, Climate Change as UN Secretary-General priority). He called for more forward-looking discussions to continue and more streamlining of GAID activities.

Summary of recommendations

1. Main role should be as a platform for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on ICT for Development, avoid duplicating other ICTD processes and contribute to CSTD and ECOSOC.
2. Enhance upward communication with the highest United Nations (UN) authorities, the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.
3. Review the GAID governance structure to enhance participation and transparency.
4. Define a clearer substantive focus for GAID's activities.
5. Involve more members of the Strategy Council in the planning of GAID activities.
6. Create working groups within the Strategy Council to take the lead on specific topics.
7. Enhance support for civil society's engagement in GAID.
8. Implement a monthly newsletter to keep stakeholders informed and increase transparency.
9. Update stakeholders on preparations and progress of the Annual Global Forum to be held in Monterrey, Mexico from 10-12 June 2009.
10. Provide more time for discussions among members at the Strategy Council and Steering Committee meetings.
11. Leverage social networking tools to increase participation, communication and exchange of experience.