



**United Nations  
Economic Commission  
for Europe**

## **Workshop report: Greening IT**

### **1. Title**

Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement

### **2. Organizers and Panellists**

Moderator: **Pavel Antonov**, BlueLink, Bulgaria / IT for environmental sustainability group coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications (organizer).

Panellists: **Milena Bokova**, BlueLink.net, Bulgaria (organizer); **Hans Hansell**, Chairman UNECE ICT Group for Development (organizer); **Michael Stanley-Jones**, Secretariat to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention); **Heather Creech**, Director, Knowledge Communications, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD); **Julian Casasbuenas**, Director, Colnodo, Colombia;

### **3. Discussion**

The workshop sought synergies in policy and technical solutions bridging Internet Governance and other Information Society policies on one side, and the environmental sustainability policies' paradigm on the other. This workshop was a step towards bridging this paradigm gap and provided a list of possible solutions and areas of further policy work:

3.1. The immense potential of the Internet and ICTs to facilitate improvements of environment and sustainable use of nature's resources creates a vast area for policy synergies. This potential needs to be realized and reflected in the further Internet Governance developments, while at the same time ICT policies need to be integrated into legislative and regulatory frameworks on:

- decreasing emissions of harmful substances in the environment;
- public access to information regarding environment and human health;
- transparency and good governance regarding environmental issues;
- equitable distribution of resources;
- corporate responsibility and fair trade; and
- all other policy fields related to environmentally sustainable development.

3.2. The existing parallel between the guiding principles of Internet Governance and the principles employed by environmental sustainability policy instruments like the Aarhus Convention, needs to be further explored and exploited. Common features and lessons learned include:

- the principle of subsidiarity in decision making which is inherent for sustainable development policies is particularly relevant for Internet Governance and ICT policies;
- multi-stakeholder involvement – already implemented by the Aarhus Convention;
- broad public participation in an international fora – already implemented by the Aarhus Convention;
- Creating a regulatory framework that obliges governments and the business to maintain electronically environmental databases and proactively share information with the public

- by means of telecommunications networks, as already implemented by the Aarhus Convention and its protocol on Pollution Release and Transfer Registers.
- Self regulation mechanisms like electronic public consultations and a formal compliance mechanism have already been tried and implemented by the Aarhus Convention.

3.5. Special focus on offsetting and minimizing the pressure on environment and human health by Internet and information technology itself, including:

- electronic waste;
- energy resources for powering the Internet;
- negative consequences on the environment by Internet infrastructures; and
- negative impacts of radiation and transmission including satellite, cell, and wireless.

Internet and ICT's positive impacts on reducing the pressure on environment and resources need to be maintained and promoted further.

3.6. Rejecting the notion that environmental sustainability policies are necessarily rooted into the precautionary principle, and therefore are in contradiction with the innovative nature of Internet and ICT policies.

#### **4. Inventory of events and actors related to the issue under discussion**

The workshop focused on the development and use of policy and institutional mechanisms which employ Internet and ICT instruments to strengthen the capacity of civil society for participation in decision-making. A case example of an international policy instrument was presented at the workshop – the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The convention, referred to as the Aarhus Convention, sets institutional and policy examples which bridge the gap between environmental sustainability and information society. ICTs featured little in Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) review by the Millennium Project, and barely in UNDP's *Human Development Report*. The impact of ICTs for sustainable development also received scant attention during WSIS. Coordination between these two major international policy processes needs improvement.

IGF's theme "Internet Governance for Development" provided an appropriate avenue for bridging the international policy efforts and technical solutions in the fields of environmentally sustainable development and information society.

#### **5. Possible follow-up**

5.1. Further mapping and comparative analysis of the synergies between Internet Governance and ICT policies on one hand, and policies regulating environmental sustainability on the other.

5.2. Expert consultations leading to better understanding and scoping of the efforts to bridge the policy paradigm.

5.3. Integrating the work with the developments under Action line C-7 Environment of the WSIS follow-up.

#### **6. Useful links**

[www.apc.org](http://www.apc.org)

[www.bluelink.net](http://www.bluelink.net)

[www.iisd.org/networks](http://www.iisd.org/networks)

[www.unece.org/env/pp/](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/)