**Statement from civil society participants in the CSTD working group on IGF improvements - Submitted to the 4th meeting of the working group, 11 January 2012**

On behalf of the civil society participants in this process we want to draw your attention to a concern which we believe could have an impact on whether this group succeeds or fails in achieving the goals mandated to it by ECOSOC.

On December 21 2011 civil society participants in the working group were informed that the CSTD would not be able to provide financial support towards the participation of civil society representatives from developing countries in the working group's fourth meeting. After seeking clarification from the Secretariat we were informed by Mr. Mongi Hamdi that the CSTD fund for civil society participation can only be utilised by participants from Least Developed Countries. Currently developing country participants in the working group are from Brazil, India and South Africa and therefore none of them qualify for support. Mr. Hamdi did clarify that this restriction is imposed by the donor and not by the CSTD itself.

We believe that his lack of support will have a negative impact on the participation of civil society during this crucial last leg of the process. Moreover, we want to emphasise that our concern extends beyond just the participation of civil society; it raises fundamental questions about the CSTD's commitment to and capacity to sustain multistakeholder participation in all its processes.

Deepening democracy and multistakeholder participation in governance requires the inclusion of groups and people who have a stake in the issues under discussion but who are frequently excluded or marginalized. As has been stated in several submissions to the working group, it is not enough to grant the right to participate to these stakeholders; provisions must be made to ensure that they can exercise this right in full.

Civil society and other groups with limited resources, such as associations or networks of small businesses, need support to participate in Internet Governance processes. Such support has been inconsistent – not just in the case of the working group, but also in the case of other important fora such as MAG meetings. This consistently hampers full multistakeholder participation and restricts the overall evolution - and results - of these processes. If the rules and mechanisms of participation in IG processes privileges groups that already have power and resources this 'imbalance' will be reflected in the outcomes of these processes. We believe this is contrary to what we have all been trying to achieve through the IGF since the Tunis Summit in 2005.

Thus far the work of this CSTD working group could be well-synthesized by the words “diversity” and “openness”. In our discussion we have always relied on a plurality of views to achieve synergy and to push us forward. We want to commend all working group members, participants, and chairpersons, for their commitment to this inclusive and open style of work.

We also want to to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the support from donors who have made multistakeholder participation in the working group possible up to this point. But at the same time we want to call attention to the fact that such donations tend to be unpredictable. Civil society participation in the IGF process (and indeed the participation of all other stakeholders from developing countries who lack the necessary resources) cannot remain dependent on unpredictable funding. We urge this group to discuss the funding of the IGF in depth, including the financial support needed for diverse and inclusive participation.

Ensuring multistakeholder participation in the context of the WSIS principles and the Tunis Agenda is not just about adhering to commitments which many governments agreed to. The ultimate goal is to generate better and more sustainable policy outcomes that reflect the diversity of voices, ideas, concerns and needs of all relevant stakeholders.