

WACC Supports Lobby of UN Communications Agency

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The Platform for the Democratisation of Communication is lobbying the International Telecommunications Union, ITU, to open up their membership and deliberations to NGOs. The Platform for the Democratisation of Communication, an informal network of international media NGOs involved in media advocacy, was convened in November 1996 at a meeting held in London jointly organised by WACC and the MacBride Roundtable.

One of the principle advocacy efforts carried out by the Platform has been to lobby the International Telecommunications Union, the last of the UN agencies to submit to the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) requirement that all UN bodies strengthen their relationship to NGOs.

In 1999, Sean O'Siochru, on behalf of the Platform, submitted the Group's report (available at WACC) entitled "Enhancing the Capacity of NGOs to achieve Development Aims through the use of Telecommunications" to the ITU. This states the case for closer ITU-NGO co-operation. The report shows the current role of NGOs using telecoms in direct and indirect ways for development and empowerment, for instance through their support of the community radio movement and highlights barriers to greater NGO use of telecoms, such as tariff barriers, licensing delays, lack of access to radio and satellite spectrums, lack of standards in emerging technologies.

Together with the Platform, Voices 21 Network, V21, is looking at NGO and civil society involvement in the planned World Summit on the Information Society to be organised by the ITU in 2003. The V21 and Platform had been involved in deliberating the pros and cons of organising a Global Summit on Communications- and the ITU initiative seems an ideal forum for globalising civil society issues related to the emerging information society.

In January this year the General Secretary of WACC, Carlos Valle, on behalf of supporting organisations and individuals and with V21 and Platform endorsement sent a letter to the General Secretary of the ITU, Yoshio Utsumi, and to others involved in organising the summit with questions aimed at clarifying ITU's position on NGO involvement in the planning and execution of the summit.

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