

CRIS News

The Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign linked to maximising/leveraging civil society involvement in the World Summit on the Information Society, WSIS, (Geneva, December 2003) is gathering steam. A CRIS initiative in Bangkok in mid-November 2002 brings together 25 representatives of IT/communication development NGOs in Asia. Their response will feed into the regional WSIS meetings scheduled for Tokyo in January 2003. The response from that event will feed into the regional WSIS meetings that are scheduled to be held in Santo Domingo in early 2003. There is just about a year to go to Geneva 2003 and a lot of planning and organisation needs to go into the CRIS campaign post-2002. Two preparatory committee meetings related to the WSIS are scheduled for Geneva in 2003 – in February and October and there will presumably be other hastily convened, ad hoc events like the Informal Meeting on Content and Themes that was held a few weeks ago in Geneva.

One of the major drawbacks of CRIS has been its lack of identity and the dispersed nature of CRIS coordination. One, eagerly awaited, happening in the life of CRIS is the imminent appointment of a full-time CRIS coordinator. This person will work out of the CRIS secretariat at WACC and will be involved in a variety of information gathering and dissemination, networking, publicity and lobbying activities. We hope that this appointment will result in a more structured Civil Society, CS, response, although it is assured that the politics of the WSIS will not make this task any easier. Another related grouping is the Civil Society Coordination Group (CSCG), a broad based front that was formed at the first Preparatory Committee meetings that were held in Geneva in July 2002. The CSCG (that has among its ranks, prominent CRIS members), its working groups and caucuses have lobbied hard at regional WSIS meetings including the just concluded European regional meeting that was held in Bucharest. While CRIS is a campaign directed towards raising the profile of CS/WSIS issues at regional levels and supporting the articulation of regional responses, CSCG is in a position to take these and other focussed CS responses forward at WSIS related meetings.

CRIS concerns have been highlighted in many of the programmes organised by partner groups, such as AMARC and APC and is also featured at the First European Social Forum, currently being held in Florence. CRIS will also be featured at the Global Social Forum in Porto Alegre in early 2003.

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Bangladesh Working Group on WSIS Formed

The Bangladesh Working group on WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society) has been formed with members from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, Centre

for Development Research Bangladesh (CDRB), Ministry of Science and ICT, Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Friendship Education Society (BFES), Bangladesh Coastal NGOs Network on Community Radio & Communication (BCNNRC) and VOICE.

The Group will arrange consultation meetings on ICTs and development, and work to formulate a position paper for Bangladesh to address the WSIS process in Asia at the PrepCom to be held in Japan and finally the summit to be held in Switzerland in 2003.

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