

IFLA Statement to the UNPGA Event on North-North, South-South and Triangular Co-operation, and ICT for Development, May 21-22, 2014

Thank you Madame Chair for giving the floor to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions – or IFLA – the global voice of libraries and their users. I wanted to thank the panellists from today and yesterday for their statements and to restrict my intervention to three key points relating to ICT for development: public access to ICTs, skills and training, and the need to include information and ICT indicators and targets in the post-2015 development framework.

Access

IFLA strongly believes that access to information supports development, and access to ICTs is an important part of the development equation. Yet many of our speakers have recognised the continuing presence of a digital divide across society. IFLA's contribution to the solving the digital divide is simple: let us recognise the importance of public access to ICTs in the community for those unable to afford hardware and connections. With 320,000 public libraries worldwide, 230,000 of which are in developing and transition countries, Member States have at their disposal committed partners already working north-south and south-south, who can provide people with access to the ICTs they need to find employment, get health information, or access government services. For women and girls, and for vulnerable and marginalised people in all countries, libraries are a community institution that makes the difference in their digital lives and we urge Member States to include the power of libraries in their development policies – we have made a briefing paper available here in the room with recommendations on how to do this.

Beyond Access

Secondly, many of our speakers have rightly recognised that being online is not an end in itself. Indeed, we need to go beyond access – both basic digital skills and Media and Information Literacy skills are needed. Libraries, particularly school and public libraries, are places where both young and old alike can access skills training. IFLA knows about this area - in 2013 the UNESCO General conference **recommended** that Member States implement IFLA's Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in their home countries. Our Recommendations give policymakers a roadmap to utilise libraries to offer people the skills they need to move beyond access and fully benefit from what ICTs have to offer.

Targets and Indicators

Finally, how can we ensure that the post-2105 development framework reaps the benefits of ICTs? First of all the SDGs must include targets and indicators on access to information across all Focus Areas being discussed. IFLA has many ideas on what these targets could be. To share just one here: Let's ensure that by 2025, public and private bodies have in place a comprehensive system guaranteeing the publication of information in the public interest and accessibility of that information.

Following this, we need to set specific targets on access to ICTs for everyone – we suggest a target under Focus Group 8 that commits to getting the cost of basic broadband below 2% of average income by 2030, and another achieving universal broadband access (i.e., 100% penetration) in every country by 2030. Connected to these, we should add another target that helps those who cannot afford access – we should guarantee public access to ICTs in all communities by 2030.

Conclusion

We heard yesterday that we need to develop new and cutting edge ICT infrastructure to help defeat the digital divide and IFLA says yes, let's do it - but don't forget what we already have: a global library network based on the premise that sharing information and knowledge supports development. Libraries can be a means of implementing the post-2015 sustainable development goals. We say that when we are building smart cities and smart societies, let's place knowledge institutions, like libraries, at the heart of them so that everyone can benefit.

Thank you Madame Chair.