

Communicating global e-sustainability solutions

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SMART 2020: Enabling the low carbon economy in the information age



THE CLIMATE GROUP   **GeSI**
GLOBAL e-SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

The Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to communicating how the ICT industry can address and provide solutions for environmental issues. Industry led, GeSI represents 26 members, including equipment manufacturers, network operators and service providers, as well as regional associations and several NGOs. GeSI www.gesi.org also has established partnerships with several business initiatives and sustainable development organisations. The GeSI community represents collaboration at its best.

BACKGROUND AND ACTIVITIES

GeSI has been active since 2001, as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Originally, the initiative was a way for the ICT industry to respond to the United Nations Millennium Goals. When it became clear there were an increasing number of issues for the ICT sector to address and that a greater impact could be made as a group, rather than individually, GeSI gained more momentum. In June 2008, GeSI became an independent legal entity and established an office in Brussels. GeSI is active on several fronts, communicating as a unified voice for the ICT industry.

GeSI's members are active in working groups, policy forums and consortiums, with most of the emphasis on how GeSI's efforts directly impact sustainability issues globally. While GeSI is keenly aware of the need for regulatory development and appropriate policy measures enabling ICT companies to realise their potential contributions towards sustainability, the organisation priority is not positioned to lobby issues. Rather, the emphasis is how GeSI's actions translate into solutions for a more sustainable society.

THE SMART 2020 REPORT

Following the introduction of its SMART 2020 Report to participants at the ITU's second international symposium on ICT and Climate Change, held in London on 17-18 June 2008, GeSI launched this report in Europe, Asia and in the US. The SMART 2020 Report was a joint project between GeSI and The Climate Group, independently analysed by McKinsey and recognised as "the world's first comprehensive report on ICT sustainability".

“ The SMART 2020 report introduces a new way of thinking – for a smart future. ”

The SMART 2020 Report shows that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the ICT sector are estimated to rise significantly, from 0.53 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2002, to 1.43 billion tonnes in 2020, if we remain on a path of business as usual. But the report also demonstrates how ICT can offer solutions and even lower the carbon footprint of all other sectors, by implementing energy efficiency enabling solutions. The SMART 2020 report introduces a new way of thinking – for a smart future. The findings of the report, which discuss how ICT can offer solutions for reducing the carbon footprint by 15 per cent by the year 2020, have been widely circulated and discussed around the world.

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The ICT sector can make great contributions to emissions reduction in logistics and buildings.



The SMART 2020 report identifies four main areas where there are opportunities for the ICT industry to make the most relevant contributions: motor systems, logistics, buildings and grids. The report demonstrates with supporting economic analysis, why ICT driven intelligence imbedded into the systems of each of these areas can yield tangible results. The starting point is to prioritise energy consumption needs and to recognise potential strains and emissions of each of these areas. Luis Neves, Chair of GeSI, stated in his foreword of the report, "It is our responsibility to estimate GHG emissions from the ICT industries and to develop opportunities for ICT to contribute to a more efficient economy." Luis Neves calls for the ICT sector to note how specific opportunities identified in the report can reduce emissions by five times the sector's own footprint. "This report has identified many opportunities for the ICT sector to replace goods and services with virtual equivalents and to provide technology to enable energy efficiency," and stated that GeSI was "committed to continue to work across the industry as a force for change." In addition, Forrester, a consultancy, stated in their briefing on the report in August 2008 that the SMART 2020 report "will raise environmental stakes for strategy professionals and IT suppliers" and that "IT vendors looking for environmental leadership must add this dimension to their slate of activities"

A unique contribution in sustainability communications, GeSI has raised the profile of the SMART 2020 report by presenting its findings relating to the ICT sector's enormous potential to address and realise sustainability, at public policy forums, such as the EU Ad-Hoc Advisory Group for Energy Efficiency. In this forum, GeSI has worked alongside other electronic associations, non-profit associations, regional and city groups as well as leading academics. The group recently presented its findings and recommendations to EU Commissioners at the Directorate General of Information Society and Media (INFOSOC). The Advisory Group reported how the ICT industry can make significant contributions and at the same time, identified the obstacles that need to be resolved. Since GeSI participates as a unified voice of ICT

companies, together with other stakeholders such as The Carbon Disclosure Project, World Wildlife Fund and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, it can go beyond company level or association level advocacy, making a unique contribution in sustainability communications.

GeSI also participates as a working group leader in the EU Commission's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework (CIF) Programme's Information Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICTPSP), a research programme on supporting energy efficiency in smartGENERATION grids (SEESGEN) through ICT. In this consortium, GeSI is aligning with 24 other stakeholders, which include research institutes and energy companies located in Europe. The working groups in this consortium cover smart grid management, monitoring, integration, business modeling, environment related issues and the testing of facilities. If intelligent systems are to be imbedded into infrastructure, the ICT industry must collaborate with energy providers and academics in this arena as well. GeSI is reaching out, leading the discussion for the ICT industry and experiencing first hand the actions taken at national policy level for consideration in EU level policy-making.

Another arena GeSI is involved with is an EU Commission consortium, the ICT21EE project, formed to report on how ICT contributes to energy efficiency in transport and infrastructure. This consortium is composed of 17 participants in public and private sectors and will work together in 2009.

A TACTICAL APPROACH – THE SUPPLY CHAIN

At the same time, GeSI's member companies collaborate with each other and other ICT stakeholders to deliver on a more immediate and tactical level. Solutions driven, GeSI's largest and most active working group is the Supply Chain Working Group. This working group is composed of 29 members, representing 16 companies, and meets fortnightly to discuss results on a wide range

Emissions from the ICT sector are estimated to rise to 1.43 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent in 2020.

of issues. The group covers a wide range of topics, ranging from labour, environmental and health and safety issues through to deeper issues in the supply chain, for example the type of minerals used in ICT equipment and the impact of its use on the environment.

Recently, the focus of the group has been on communicating with suppliers to encourage their participation in a self-assessment questionnaire on their supply chain practices, which will later be validated through audits; a win-win situation for companies assessing their suppliers as well as minimising the audit cost and process for suppliers. An important part of this assessment is the learning and capability strategy that GeSI supports; aimed at helping to educate suppliers through the process, including awareness and resolution of 'red flag' or problem areas. GeSI, together with its partner the Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC), have jointly developed a web-based tool and standard for this assessment, the E-TASC (Electronics: tool for accountable supply chains).

GeSI'S GOALS

GeSI aims to position ICT firms as enablers for reducing carbon output across all sectors. GeSI views the ICT sector as the key to resolve our current dilemma – how to reduce carbon output, while meeting the increasing global consumer demand for higher powered ICT products and services.

GeSI's members have a sense of the world watching its achievements – especially after receiving so much attention with the worldwide launch of the SMART2020 report. The objective of the report was a call to action; to motivate all sectors into action so as to avoid the 'business-as-usual' scenario. Now that GeSI has clearly illustrated what can happen and what can be done, GeSI members are motivated to keep up the momentum and continue GeSI's record of achievements, especially in the area of solutions. Each GeSI member is strongly encouraged to join a working group, report on their achievements and to utilise the resources developed by the membership. GeSI's approach is very inclusive – especially when external experts, regional associations or institutions share the vision on how ICT can provide solutions by virtue of more intelligent systems.

GeSI has long spoken as a unified voice, beginning as a UNEP/ITU initiative. Now as an independent legal entity, with more and more visibility and a greater mandate, GeSI has raised the bar for more achievements and, as was envisioned, for an even greater impact in creating a more sustainable future for all.

Author

Luis Neves was born in Covilhã, Portugal in 1953. He finished his University degree in History at Lisbon University. Later on he studied law for two years at Universidade Moderna, Setúbal, Portugal. Luis worked for more than 25 years for Marconi (today Portugal Telecom) as Head of Department, and lately at the Corporate Office. After leaving Marconi, he started an international career and developed an intensive activity at European and International levels. He participated in different international bodies and was a permanent member of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications in the European Union and 'Chair' of diverse Work groups, member of the High Level Group on the Information Society. He was appointed as 'Expert' by the European Commission to different Working Groups in the Telecommunications field as well as in questions related to 'Information Society' issues. More recently, he was invited to include an Ad-Hoc advisory group of the EU Commission on ICT and energy efficiency. Luis joined Deutsche Telekom in May 2004 and he is currently the Head of Sustainable Development and Environment at Deutsche Telekom Corporate Responsibility Department. Luis is a member of the ETNO Sustainable Working Group. In March 2006 he was elected as Chairperson of GeSI, the Global e-Sustainable Initiative.

Organisation

GeSI, the Global e-Sustainability Initiative, is an International Non-Profit Association formed to help Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies, and the sector as a whole, become more sustainable. GeSI's mission is to provide a platform for ICT companies, NGOs and other stakeholders realise the benefits of ICT in relation sustainability. GeSI is committed to creating and promoting technologies and practices that foster economic, environmental and social sustainability and drive economic growth and productivity. Together, GeSI's members and partners share mutually beneficial goals – to reduce carbon output, especially in ways that have a positive impact on the bottom line.

Enquiries

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