

# GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2010

*Focus on ICTs and environmental sustainability*



ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)  
AND HUMANIST INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (HIVOS)

# Global Information Society Watch

## 2010



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## Preface

*Global negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009 did not make much progress in addressing the critical challenges posed by climate change. Some people argue that information and communications technologies (ICTs) are amongst the most important tools for addressing climate change. At the same time, increased consumption and production of ICTs contribute to harmful emissions and waste. The ICT for development (ICT4D) sector is only just beginning to realise that it needs to consider some of the potential contradictions in its efforts to rapidly expand ICT infrastructure in developing countries. In the developed world, the ubiquitousness of ICTs means that they have become almost invisible – and this “invisibility” extends to their potential for harmful impacts on the environment.*

*In this context, GISWatch 2010 makes an important contribution as the voice of global civil society, and is aimed at both beginners and experts in the fields of ICTs and climate change, electronic waste (e-waste), and the use of ICTs for environmental good generally. The reports in this volume do not take a single point of view on ICTs and environmental sustainability: instead there are counterpoints here, arguments and implicit or explicit disagreements that show a vibrant and critical arena that has started to receive attention once again in recent years. They are, importantly, a rallying cry for ICT4D organisations, consumers of electronics, and government and business stakeholders to pay attention to the environment. Business plans, roll-out agendas, and developmental strategies will, many of these reports argue, have to change for a sustainable future.*

*Environmental challenges provide an opportunity to place sustainable development at the core of our thinking and practice. Sustainable development involves consideration of economic development, social development and environmental protection. Growth is not always sustainable. Economic growth alone can entrench existing inequalities in access to power and resources, and create new ones, or it can challenge those inequalities: neither is inevitable.*

*GISWatch 2010 includes seven thematic reports, dealing with the global ICT footprint, emerging research agendas, sustainability, e-waste, smart technologies, green grassroots technologies, and building advocacy networks, as well as an institutional overview and a consideration of green indicators. There is also, as with GISWatch 2009, a mapping section – an exciting new addition to the GISWatch report. This year it offers a comparative analysis of “green” media spheres on the web.*

*There are six regional reports, from South Asia, East Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean, which precede 53 individual country reports – five more than last year, despite the relative newness of the topic.*

*GISWatch aims to make a critical contribution to building a people-centred information society. Its purpose is to stimulate a collaborative approach to policy advocacy and create a common platform where disparate experiences can be shared, and progress – and lack of progress – assessed. Ultimately, it hopes to impact on policy development processes in countries, regions and at a global level.*

*We hope you find GISWatch 2010 inspiring and challenging. ■*

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**GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2010** investigates the impact that information and communications technologies (ICTs) have on the environment – both good and bad.

Written from a civil society perspective, **GISWatch 2010** covers some 50 countries and six regions, with the key issues of ICTs and environmental sustainability, including climate change response and electronic waste (e-waste), explored in seven expert thematic reports. It also contains an institutional overview and a consideration of green indicators, as well as a mapping section offering a comparative analysis of “green” media spheres on the web.

While supporting the positive role that technology can play in sustaining the environment, many of these reports challenge the perception that ICTs will automatically be a panacea for critical issues such as climate change – and argue that for technology to really benefit everyone, consumption and production patterns have to change. In order to build a sustainable future, it cannot be “business as usual”.

**GISWatch 2010** is a rallying cry to electronics producers and consumers, policy makers and development organisations to pay urgent attention to the sustainability of the environment. It spells out the impact that the production, consumption and disposal of computers, mobile phones and other technology are having on the earth’s natural resources, on political conflict and social rights, and the massive global carbon footprint produced.

**GISWatch 2010** is the fourth in a series of yearly reports critically covering the state of the information society from the perspectives of civil society organisations across the world.

**GISWatch** is a joint initiative of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos).

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2010 Report  
[www.GISWatch.org](http://www.GISWatch.org)

