Statement by Sophia Bekele on ACCESS
The UNESCO CONNECTing the Dots Conference,
3rd to 4th March 2015 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the organizers for inviting me and my organization to this very important global meeting to share our perspectives.

Participating in Public Policy formulations is very important to us since it affects us all net-citizens. By the same token, we want our voice to be heard. Therefore our organization is very active in such debates. We are very glad to have participated and lent our earlier responses to the Internet study with UNESCO, which is the basis of why we are invited.

I believe this action can demonstrate that we have "reinforced our rights to seek and receive information, which is the first principle of ACCESS in the internet study.

To comment a bit on the study, I commend the efforts put on the study. – it did an excellent job of mapping the mandate of UNESCO, against the 4 Keystones defined under Access; Freedom of Expression; Privacy and Ethics, to create a Knowledge society and bridge the digital divide. and also took a holistic approach to addressing the issues as it relates to the same area.

This clarity over mandate becomes very important as more Intergovernmental Organizations get involved in debates over Internet. I think most of us netparticipants know that, as many of us here are part of the IG political theater.

Finally in looking at the questions you have asked on "Access" and if they were adequately addressed by the draft study, my initial reaction is yes for the most part it did, however there are few fundamental points that I want to point out that would require further consideration. Primarily from African continent perspective which I am speaking today, however this may be applicable for most emerging economy countries.

1- Rights - Awareness creation over the "Rights" to Access, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19, which affirms that the right to freedom of expression
    a. Open Access: Adaption of the PPP model for cooperation and sustainable growth.
2- Marginalized communities: Youth are excluded, which now due to technology are vibrant pat of the economy.
3- Content: Content over mobile or Mob apps, crowd funding – more responsive to cultural and linguistic initiatives.
4- Media/Info Literacy: Well covered with the discussions of new media. I think it must be due to the high no. of journalists speakers I observed on the agenda.

Thank you.