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Principles and Recommendations from the Science Point of View for consideration at the World Summit on the Information Society

Scientific research is one of the key factors underpinning the development of the Information Society. The fundamental technological components of the Information Society: electricity, radio waves, the World Wide Web (www) and the web browser were all first developed in academic laboratories. Ensuring equitable access to scientific knowledge is essential in order to achieve the Millennium goals and the use of Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) now offers incredible opportunities in this regard. Scientific research leads to the development of new technologies themselves and to the production of data and information that, when combined with these technologies, can be of huge benefit to society as a whole. The essential role of science and scientists in building the Information Society should be clearly acknowledged in the declaration of principles and reflected in the plan of action from WSIS.

Principles:

Scientific knowledge and data are of enormous importance in a global Information Society:

- To foster innovation and promote economic development
- For efficient and transparent decision-making, particularly at the governmental level
- For education and training

Scientific data and information should be as widely available and affordable as possible: the more people that are able to share them, the greater the positive effects and returns to society. Scientific knowledge is a "public good".

The development of new ICTs opens up unprecedented opportunities to ensure universal and equitable access to scientific data and information and to enhance the global knowledge pool. However, excessive privatization and commercialization of scientific data and information is a serious threat to the realization of these opportunities for the benefit of society as a whole,

Agenda for Action:

1. Recognizing the critical role of universities and research institutions in knowledge production and training, a global effort is necessary to ensure that these institutions in developing countries have affordable high-speed Internet connections.
2. Promote sustainable capacity building and education initiatives to ensure that the new opportunities offered by ICTs for the production and sharing of scientific data and information can be realized in all countries.

3. Ensure that any legal regime on database protection guarantees full and open access to data created with public funding. Restrictions on proprietary data should also be designed so as to maximize availability for academic research and teaching purposes.
4. Provide long-term support for the systematic and efficient collection, preservation and provision of essential digital data, e.g. population and meteorological data, in all countries.
5. Promote interoperability principles and metadata standards to facilitate cooperation and effective and efficient use of collected data and information.
6. Promote electronic publishing, differential pricing schemes and appropriate open source initiatives to make scientific information affordable and accessible on an equitable basis in all countries.
7. Encourage initiatives to increase scientific literacy and consumer awareness of how to select and interpret scientific information published on the World Wide Web, recognizing the key role of the media in communicating science.
8. Support urgently needed research on the use of existing and novel information technologies in key areas, such as tele-medicine and education. the socio-economic value of public-domain information anti open access regimes.
9. Recognize that there is an important role for science in developing and implementing the new governance mechanisms that are necessary in the information society.

