**Southern Africa Communications for Development (SACOD)
and partners on behalf of Highway Africa**

SACOD, SABC, Highway Africa input for WSIS

*– for consideration in the Intersessional
Period PrepCom2/PrepCom3*

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Southern Africa Communications for Development is a network of independent film and video producers. SACOD exists to promote the use of video and film in communicating development issues.

Highway Africa is an annual conference hosted in South Africa, bringing together journalists and new media practitioners from across the African continent. The conference aims to put African media into the centre of debates about ICTs and the Global Information Society.

The 2002 conference, an accredited WSSD side event with the theme "Wiring journalism for development", adopted a declaration called the *Highway Africa Charter on African Media and the Digital Divide*, to inter alia be used as input into the WSIS process. The next annual Highway Africa conference (the 7th to date) takes place in September 2003, themed "Mainstreaming Media in the Information Society", with a strong focus on the WSIS, African media and ICTs to equip delegates to participate in, and report on the WSIS from an informed perspective.

The co-hosts and organisers of the annual conference, Rhodes University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, appointed a drafting committee to compile this document as input for consideration in the WSIS process to draft the Declaration of Principles.

The input draws mainly on the *Highway Africa Charter on African Media and the Digital Divide,* as well as other seminal documents already endorsed by multilateral organisations.

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES (21/03/03)

Section 1 A

Recognition should be given in the preamble to the Declaration of Principles, to the following declarations and charters with an international standing:

1. The Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press (3 May 1991) - UN

2. African Charter on Broadcasting (2001) - AU, Bamako Declaration 2002, UNESCO

3. Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (October 2002) - AU

4. Charter on African Media & the Digital Divide (August 2002)

Section 1 C

1) Information and communication infrastructure

Paragraph 17

Recognise the role of the media by including the following as 17A:

All stakeholders should
- recognise the potential of ICTs to broaden access by communities to the media;
- utilise the opportunity to build community media in partnership with efforts to promote universal access to ICTs;
- recognise the unique role of media as a tool to enable and promote community participation in their own development and enhance this role by building partnerships with relevant stakeholders such as civic movements, NGOs and local governments.

2) Access to information and knowledge

Paragraph 21

Amend to read:

The right to communicate, the right for citizens to access information <u>and the enabling role of the media in this regard</u> are fundamental to the Information Society.

3) The role of governments, the business sector and civil society in the promotion of ICTs for development

Amend headline above to read:

The role of governments, the business sector, <u>media</u> and civil society in the promotion of ICTs for development <u>and democracy</u>

Paragraph 29

Add the following additional paragraph as 29A:

Promotion of ICTs in development and democracy by government, business, civil society through an open and participatory process. In particular the media should be utilised to publicise and promote public debate by:
- stimulating interest in the development of national information and communications policies and infrastructure, locating ICT policies and strategies within broader regional and sub-regional policies and strategies that seek to address structural inequalities;
- exploiting the potential of ICTs as advocacy tools for freedom of expression and other human rights

4) Capacity building

Paragraph 30

Amend to read:

30. All people must be enabled to acquire the necessary skills in order to participate actively in, and understand, the Information Society and knowledge economy thus benefiting fully from the possibilities it offers. Special attention must be paid to training of trainers <u>and journalists</u> as well as building the institutional capacities to collect, organize, store and share information and knowledge.

6) Enabling environment

Paragraph 38

Amend to read:

<u>Governments should create an enabling environment through</u> supportive and predictable policy, legal and regulatory framework<u>s, providing infrastructure as well as fiscal incentives, as</u> important prerequisites for the development of the Information Society.

Paragraph 41

Adjust to read:

Policy-making and national strategies: Strengthening the policy-making capacity and encouraging public participation through the media in the area of ICTs to enhance national and regional ICT policy-making processes and institutions is of utmost importance. ICTs will advance development if related efforts and programmes are integrated in national development strategies.

Contributed by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa, and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), in our capacities of joint convenors of the annual Highway Africa conference (www.highwayafrica.org.za).