

WSIS PREPARATORY MEETING (24-26 JUNE, TUNIS)

EU STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY  
H.E. AMBASSADOR MARY WHELAN ON BEHALF OF THE EU  
ON 24 JUNE 2004

**Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,**

**Ireland, currently holding the European Union Presidency, has the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union. I congratulate Ambassador Karklins on his election as President of the Prep Com.**

**We would like to thank the Government and the people of Tunis for their warm hospitality and commitment in hosting this Preparatory meeting and the second Phase of the WSIS. The European Union also wishes to thank the ITU Secretary General for his report on activities carried out between the Geneva Phase and the Preparatory meeting.**

**The European Union attaches great importance to the WSIS process and is determined to play an active role in pursuit of a successful outcome to its second phase. Since the Geneva Phase the EU has been preparing its input for Phase II and trying to bring forward with and within the Member States the commitments entered into in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action.**

**Phase II will allow us to cross the gap that brings us “From Principles to Action”. Phase I resulted in all WSIS stakeholders agreeing on the Principles and re-affirmed the right to freedom of opinion and expression as essential foundations of the Information Society. Our continued joint commitment to and respect for the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action is fundamental to the success of Phase II. This Phase should focus on the implementation and follow-up of the Plan of Action, including the promotion of partnerships between stakeholders and, enhancing, where necessary, the dialogue and cooperation among partners.**

**In our view, the outcome of Phase II should be a single and concise document by Heads of State and Government and could consist of two parts: a political preamble reaffirming the commitment to the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action and an operative part on action, taking forward, the implementation of the Plan of Action. It should not reopen any of the principles agreed in Phase I.**

**The EU looks forward to an effective preparatory process, but one that is less elaborate and lighter than Phase I. We have to learn from the Geneva Phase and ensure that this process will be effective and at the same time manageable and cost efficient. Positive steps have been taken in this direction and we are confident that Ambassador Karklins, the Chair of the Preparatory Committee, will fulfil his important task with this in mind.**

**In our view the World Summit should be seen as an opportunity to address ICTs issues in all societies, developed and developing alike. With this in mind, the EU intends to participate fully in the Working Group on Internet Governance and the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms being set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations. We trust that these bodies will soon be operational and are confident that they will make a meaningful contribution to the process.**

**The EU believes that Civil Society and the Private Sector have a key role to play in the implementation of the Plan of Action, *inter alia*, through the development of e-strategies and the promotion of public-private partnerships. A successful outcome of the Tunis Phase of WSIS will be assured only if Civil Society and the Private Sector are fully involved, along with governments. We thus welcome the arrangements provided for their participation in this meeting as an important step in this regard.**

**The EU and its Member States are among the most significant external donors and investors in ICTs in developing countries, consistent with our commitment to the Monterrey Consensus. The EU will engage in more concerted dialogue with our partners and other stakeholders in the WSIS process on the EU's contributions and on further possibilities to jointly promote Information Society for development.**

**We have an important agenda to go through in this meeting. We need to set the principles and mechanisms that will ensure an efficient preparatory process and a successful outcome of WSIS Phase II. Let us join our efforts to accomplish this task.**

**The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia and the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, align themselves with this statement.**

**I thank you for your kind attention.**