



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mrs Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**Opening of the WSIS Forum 2010**

**Geneva, 10 May 2010, 9.30 am**

Ministers,  
Distinguished guests,  
Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I deeply regret that I will not be able to participate at the opening of this 2010 World Summit for the Information Society Forum.

Let me begin by warmly greeting and thanking Mr Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for hosting this important event, and for closely co-operating with UNESCO and the UNCTAD in its preparation.

I would also like to convey my greetings to the many other participants who have travelled from far and wide to share their knowledge and expertise over the coming days.

From the very beginning of the WSIS process, UNESCO has focused on technology as a means to human development, based on the four key principles of freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and quality education for all.

These principles go to the heart of UNESCO's mandate to build peace in the minds of men and women through cooperation in education, science and culture.

New technologies, particularly mobile telephones and the Internet, have already done much to bring us all closer together. As they are taken up ever more widely all over the world, I am convinced they can contribute positively to the mutual

understanding and inter-cultural dialogue that UNESCO seeks to foster in this International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, for which UNESCO is the lead agency.

As this gathering takes place, the world is facing multiple economic, environmental and ethical challenges that affect humankind as never before, and that make co-operation and knowledge-sharing essential.

We are also rapidly approaching the 2015 deadline to meet an array of important present-day multilateral agendas – the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All and the World Summit on the Information Society goals. As lead agency for EFA, UNESCO highlights the important contribution that information and communication technology can make towards achieving the Education for All goals, which are underpinned by the central notion of quality.

Information and communication technologies are becoming, and will continue to be, instrumental in improving the lives of the world's poorest, which is why the Geneva Plan of Action continues to inform UNESCO's daily work towards achieving these important goals.

However, so that the World Summit outcomes fulfil their enormous potential to spur development, we must ensure that the narrowing of the technology divide is matched by a similar narrowing of the knowledge divide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This mid-term point between the World Summit and the 2015 deadline for its targets to be met is an opportunity to reflect upon what has been achieved so far, and what our future actions must be. This is the subject of a report, prepared by UNESCO, which we will be launching later today.

The pace of technological advances and the rapid take-up of new, cheaper, technology since the 2003 Geneva Plan of Action, highlight the importance of analyzing current trends and anticipating the potential shape of future digital and knowledge divides.

Broadband applications might well be one of these important future trends. This is why ITU and UNESCO have jointly decided to launch a broadband commission that will examine all aspects of this new technology, from its practical application and its environmental implications to how it will affect the spread of knowledge in developed and developing countries.

UNESCO remains fully committed to the World Summit goals, to bridging knowledge divides through the fostering of strong political will, through the enhancement institutional and individual capacities, and in many other concrete ways, such as the creation of the World Digital Library.

In our capacity as head agency of the United Nations Group on the Information Society for the next year, and in the longer term, UNESCO will work to maintain momentum among stakeholders, to create new partnerships and to build on the progress made thus far.

May this conference bring us another step closer to achieving the knowledge societies that will offer new opportunities to people all over the world.