SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY ROBERT AYMAR, DIRECTOR GENERAL
OF THE CONSEIL EUROPÉEN POUR LA RECHERCHE NUCLÉAIRE
(CERN) ON “AFRICAN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKING”

REPORT FROM MULTI STAKEHOLDER EVENTS

18 November 2005

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

CERN with its extensive knowledge of Information and Communication Technologies participated actively in the first WSIS in Geneva in 2003, in order to explain the role that science has played and continues to play in the development of the information society. Subsequent actions have concentrated on two important items:

1. Making scientific knowledge, educational information and best practices available as keys to development.
   CERN, since its foundation in 1954, has published openly all its scientific results, and electronically for 20 years, including scientific software. The World Wide Web was invented at CERN and placed in the public domain for the benefit of all.
   CERN actively supports the Open Access movement, which aims for universal and lasting availability of all knowledge, cultural heritage and educational best practices. CERN advocates the establishment of open electronic knowledge repositories worldwide.

2. CERN invites scientists and governments to promote the creation of national research and education networking organisations to take ownership of the special needs for such networks in their home countries. The aim is to connect all universities and places of learning at sufficient bandwidth, allowing all scientists to learn from each other and to participate in state-of-the-art science.
   CERN together with ITU and the United Nations University recently organized a workshop on research and education networking in Africa. This workshop brought together most of the organisations engaged in science and education, funding agencies, civil society and business entities.
   It is now a turning point in Africa, where connecting all universities to the internet at sufficient bandwidth is within reach.
   Two principal points were raised in this workshop:
   Ownership: It was emphasised that the momentum for improved networking must be driven by grass-root initiatives from universities and other educational institutes. They should take ownership, propose common solutions and strategies.
   Passing the message to governments: Governments should adopt conducive policy and regulatory environments to promote investment in broadband network infrastructure for the use of the African research and education institutes. The network’s availability, quality and performance needs to reach levels, attained in similar institutions in other continents.
In conclusion, I strongly call for the connection of the universities around the world to the international networks at sufficient bandwidth. I further urge the support of the Open Access movement to boost the uptake of scientific knowledge and practice, for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your attention.