



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

**ITU/Korea WSIS Thematic Meeting on
Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for
Bridging the Digital Divide**

Seoul, Republic of Korea, 23 - 24 June 2005

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OPENING REMARKS

Dr Tim Kelly, Head Strategy and Policy Unit, ITU

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of ITU, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this WSIS Thematic Meeting on “Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide”.

The World Summit on the Information Society was initiated at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 1998. In December 2001, the UN adopted the WSIS as a Summit in two phases. The first phase of the Summit was held in Geneva, in December 2003, when governments and other stakeholders from 176 UN Member States, including around 50 Heads of State and Government, adopted the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

Now, in June 2005, we are a few months away from the Tunis phase of the Summit, and this is a critical time in shaping the success of the overall WSIS process. At the first PrepCom of the Tunis Phase, held in Hammamet in June 2004, it was decided that the Tunis phase would have three areas of focus:

- First, the Summit is to deal with the financing of ICT for Development. A UN Task Force on Financial Mechanisms was established and reported in December 2004. WSIS PrepCom-2, which took place in February 2005, succeeded in agreeing upon an almost final text to be adopted in Tunis, including the creation of a Digital Solidarity Fund. We will hear more of this shortly, from our keynote speakers.
- Second, the Summit is to deal with another piece of unfinished business from the Geneva phase, namely the issue of Internet Governance. The UN Working Group on Internet Governance held their final meeting in Geneva last week and their report will be officially released on 18 July. This is likely to be the main topic of discussion at WSIS PrepCom-3, in September.
- The third area of focus of the Tunis phase is the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action. This WSIS Thematic Meeting is an important step in the implementation process because it deals with one of the cross-cutting methodological concepts of the Plan of Action, namely that stakeholders can achieve more by working together in multi-stakeholder partnerships than they can achieve alone.

In paragraph 29 of the WSIS Plan of Action, it is stated that implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action, at national, regional and international levels should take place, inter alia, through partnerships among stakeholders. Furthermore, in paragraph 8d, each country is urged to have at least one multi-stakeholder partnership or a public/private partnership ready by the end of this year, in order to provide a showcase for future action.

This WSIS Thematic Meeting, which is co-organised by ITU and the Republic of Korea, is specifically designed to provide a showcase for the success of multi-stakeholder partnership across the globe; especially those that fulfil the aims of Action Line C2, to provide ICT connectivity for all humankind. During the course of the next two days, we will be hearing from a range of multi-stakeholder partnerships, and learning what are the factors that led to their success. ITU and KADO were two of more than 20 partners who, last

week in Geneva, launched the Connect the World multi-stakeholder partnership. This partnership has a specific mission to reach the 800'000 or so villages worldwide without a single telephone.

In addition, we will be looking at the issue of measurement of the digital divide. In an earlier workshop, held last September in Busan under the ITU/Korea “Digital Bridges Initiative”, we launched a process for the creation of a composite digital opportunity index. Tomorrow, we will be examining a proposed methodology document for measuring each country’s performance in bridging the digital divide. I am happy to say that our host country, the Republic of Korea, has proved to be one of the most successful in this respect, establishing a position of global leadership in the fields of broadband and high-speed mobile data.

To conclude, both ITU and the government of the Republic of Korea are committed to the dual task of monitoring the digital divide and to overcoming it, through the work of multi-stakeholder partnerships. In the results of this meeting, which will feed into the WSIS process, we hope to show the value of partnership.

Thank you.