

## Foreword

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ITU and UNCTAD are proud to publish this 2007 edition of the World Information Society Report, benchmarking the continuing growth of the Information Society around the world.

This Report is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognized the need for monitoring and evaluation of WSIS follow-up to determine whether the Summit succeeded in what it set out to do. This Report tracks progress in digital opportunity for 181 economies since the start of the WSIS process, which was held in two phases: in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in November 2005.

Secondly, this Report shows that there has been a steady expansion in digital opportunity, both in terms of more widespread access to basic Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the growth in high-speed access to ICTs, on both fixed line and mobile networks. Ever greater numbers of people around the world are enjoying access to the benefits ICTs can bring. Already, the number of people using ICTs around the world has doubled since the WSIS was first proposed in 1998. By the start of 2008, there will be around three billion mobile phones and more than one billion fixed lines around the world. This suggests that we have already surpassed the WSIS target that states that more than half of the world's inhabitants should have access to ICTs within their reach. However, the Report also suggests that disparities and inequality in access are evolving: the digital divide is taking on new forms in terms of the differences in the speed and quality of access to ICTs.

Lastly, this Report is important because, as a joint publication between ITU and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), it is a fine example of the principles of multi-stakeholder collaboration that the Summit endorsed. The report has been created by the "Digital Opportunity Platform", an open multi-stakeholder platform with contributions from governments, academics and civil society, as well as inter-governmental organisations. For it is only by drawing upon the resources of a range of different stakeholders that we can build an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented Information Society, that can accommodate the needs of all participants.

For these reasons, ITU and UNCTAD are proud to publish this second edition of the World Information Society Report and we look forward to a continued and successful collaboration in monitoring WSIS follow-up in the implementation of the WSIS goals by 2015.

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