

Kicki Nordström
WBU President

Address
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Excellencies Mr. Kofi Annan, leaders of the world, Ambassadors, official delegates, the private sector and dear civil society, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to be able to represent the civil society of 5 billion people, including the disability community, in a United Nations event like this Summit.

The role and contribution from civil society on subjects such as the information society require that new rules be considered, which ensure the right of civil society to participate actively in the process from now and further on.

When everything comes around we are all part of the civil society. When you, as official delegates return to your homes, you too then will be part of the civil society.

We therefore hope that the civil society can and will continue to play an important role during the second Phase of Information Society and beyond.

However, an open attitude and willingness among governments is required.

Tomorrow the Civil Society officially will presents its own declaration. That means that the Civil Society globally has joined hands in a common understanding, which will take us from here to the next phase of the summit.

The International Civil Society Bureau deserves to be mentioned here, since it has not only engaged a coherent dialogue with the

governments, but also enabled structured and a co-ordinated participation of all civil society family members.

This Summit is important for closing the gap between rich and poor, between nations and between individuals.

In this respect I would like to remind us all about the 8 Millennium goals, which we all are set to fulfil at all levels at all times.

It is the responsibility of decision-makers whether at international, national or local levels, to ensure that priorities are set, which can meet the needs of the most disadvantaged groups and people. Only then we will have a society for all!

More than ever before, the Information Society must be adopted in accordance with the values expressed in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of human rights.

Before going on to the particular situation and the expectations of persons with disabilities, I would like to mention the need of inclusion of other civil society members at large.

The inclusion of women and girls, elderly and young people, indigenous people, migrant workers and refugees **MUST** be considered in the future information society.

I will ask you to look around at this Summit, with such an enormous amount of exhibitions and endless amount of information. Non of these are in format that is accessible for me as a blind person. For my colleagues and me who are unable to read ink prints are excluded from information here. The goal of the summit on information for all has closed its door for some!

The World Forum on Disability in the Information Society organised by people with disabilities, will stress that their message must have a real and true influence on the process from now and further on.

People with disabilities are specifically and directly affected by the way in which the information society designs and cares about all its users.

If we shall talk of a true inclusion, its outcome is dependent on how the content, methods of communication and ICTs are standardised, designed, developed and made available.

Our needs and requirements are often unknown, misunderstood and even misrepresented by the society.

Matters of accessibility for persons with disabilities have always been left in the hands of all mighty Gods, charity-holders and super-human beings.

However, we have come to Geneva with genuine hope that the real inclusive information society should do better than what we have faced, up to now.

Finally, thanks to the Republic and Canton of Geneva, for its financial support, which has allowed for the first time in history the Civil Society to undertake its work in liaison with all the families of civil society world wide.

Thank you