

DG/2006/020
Original: English

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
Mr Koichiro Matsuura

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the Consultation Meeting
of WSIS Action Line Moderators/Facilitators

Geneva, 24 February 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to greet you all this morning and to welcome you to this consultation meeting of WSIS Action Line Moderators. I greatly appreciate that you have all accepted our joint invitation to discuss how we can best coordinate our efforts and organize efficiently the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action through multi-stakeholder partnership.

From the outset, I would like to thank Secretary-General Utsumi and Administrator Dervis for their cooperation in organizing this meeting and to commend them for their leadership and engagement throughout the WSIS process. It is a process that is ongoing for we are meeting here at the Palais des Nations to plan the implementation of the WSIS outcomes with all stakeholders. Let me assure you that it is with a great sense of responsibility that UNESCO joins with ITU and UNDP to assume the “leading facilitating roles” in the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action that the Summit has entrusted to us.

I am delighted to see that, in the aftermath of Tunis, so many initiatives have been taken by WSIS stakeholders – governments, civil society, the private sector and intergovernmental organizations - to start implementation. This is a sign of the extraordinary spirit that was generated during the Summit and which is being sustained by the ICT revolution taking place around us.

Your presence here clearly demonstrates your commitment to be part and parcel of this process and we are all looking forward to your suggestions on how to shape it in a truly multi-stakeholder fashion so that we can translate the Geneva Plan of Action into concrete results and to make it work for development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before making some proposals for the realization of the decisions of the Summit, I would like to highlight three of its outcomes that I consider to be particularly important.

First, the Summit has helped to generate a high-level dialogue on many matters relating to the Information Society, which simply had not been taking place before. Such dialogue, I believe, is vital as new phases of the digital revolution unfold and as its impact becomes increasingly global in character.

Second, WSIS has helped to show that ICT is not merely a tool or instrument that belongs to “technology” rather than “society”, but is, in fact, deeply embedded in social processes, knowledge, culture, science and education. ICTs have fast become

as integral to our lives as the ‘old’ technologies of print, radio, TV and cinema. By helping us to create new knowledge and to live different kinds of lives, ICT is clearly not something separate from us. The growing development of this integrated, holistic understanding is an important outcome of the Summit.

Third, the Summit has been a catalyst for partnership between a wide range of stakeholders. It served to bring together different constituencies of interest and provided opportunities for cooperation and exchange. The development of multi-stakeholder partnerships, I believe, will be one of the lasting benefits of the Summit.

Now, at the end of a five-year process, we are entering a new period with many far-reaching consequences for the global community.

One of the essential outcomes of the Summit was the establishment of a framework for implementation of its results at the international level.

The Summit’s decision that the implementation of the WSIS outcomes at the international level should be multi-stakeholder is, in this context, particularly important. I would like to highlight the two additional key parameters set by the Summit for implementation, namely, that it should “take account of the themes and action lines in the Plan of Action” and be “moderated or facilitated by UN agencies when appropriate”.

In addition, our basis for work is the indicative and non-exhaustive list in the Tunis agenda that assigns responsibilities for facilitating the implementation of the eleven Action Lines of the Geneva Plan of Action.

The main result that we expect from our meeting today is to consider two levels of coordination, namely:

- The coordination of the implementation of each Action Line; and
- The overarching coordination among the Action Line Facilitators/Moderators.

Let me first look at the coordination at the Action Line level. According to the wishes of the Summit, there should be one or several facilitators for each of the eleven Action Lines. Their primary function would be to facilitate the work of multi-stakeholder teams – which should include governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations - to be established for the implementation of each of the Action Lines at the international level and in a light-footed manner.

Draft terms of reference for these functions have been tabled for your consideration and discussion.

The Summit has outlined potential Moderators or Facilitators for each Action Line. We expect the meeting to comment on this list.

I believe that, in the cases where several stakeholders are named, leadership of the facilitation effort may emerge in several ways - for example, from negotiations over the distribution of roles among the listed institutions or from a wider engagement that embraces competent, but not named, stakeholders. However, in accordance with the multi-stakeholder spirit of WSIS, the participants of each Action Line team should be open to all stakeholders.

We are all aware that the role of implementer, facilitator and coordinator as well as participation in other parts of the international post-WSIS coordination machinery will require serious commitments sustained over many years. This will call for effective strategic and operational planning, and will require the commitment to provide adequate human, technical and financial resources.

For its part, UNESCO stands ready to assume the role of a moderator, alone or with other agencies, in the seven Action Lines where its name appears, namely:

- Access to information and knowledge
- E-learning
- E-science
- Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- Media
- Ethical dimensions of the Information Society
- International and regional cooperation

Let me now move to the level of the overarching coordination among the Moderators. Indeed, in order to promote coherence and the exchange of information among the Moderators responsible for individual Action Lines, there is a need for some form of overarching coordination in order to avoid duplication of efforts and redundancy.

This coordination should make use of existing institutions and cooperation mechanisms and not create new organizational forms. It should not result in unnecessary administrative burden and should not operate in a prescriptive fashion.

For your discussion, we have prepared draft terms of reference for the work of the Leading Facilitating Agencies. Such a flexible framework would include, for

example, the preparation of a basic set of procedures, processes and templates for reporting, and of annual reports on the achievements of implementation.

As for the UN system, I believe that the “United Nations Group on the Information Society” to be established within the Chief Executives Board for Coordination will play an important role as it will provide an interagency mechanism with the main objective of coordinating substantive and policy issues facing the UN system’s implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda. The discussions of the High Level Committee on Programmes of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination next week will certainly clarify the exact role of this mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I would like to reiterate UNESCO’s commitment within the implementation and follow-up processes. It is three-fold:

- First, UNESCO will continue to implement concrete activities included in the Geneva Plan of Action within the framework of its regular programme and budget;
- Second, UNESCO is committed to help facilitate the coherent implementation of up to seven Action Lines in its areas of competence; and
- Finally, UNESCO stands ready to engage, together with ITU and UNDP, in the overall multi-stakeholder coordination of the Facilitators of all eleven Action Lines.

I am looking forward to the results of your discussions on how to best coordinate these responsibilities.

Thank you.