

## **SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**

### **STATEMENT FROM AMBASSADOR JANIS KARKLINS, PRESIDENT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE TUNIS PHASE OF WSIS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SUMMIT**

**16 November 2005**

Your Excellency, President of Tunisia,  
Mr Secretary-General,  
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Heads of Government,  
Mr Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

We declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This noble and visionary principle was adopted during the Geneva summit and will be reaffirmed here in Tunis. More importantly, it will remain a solid reference point for our common determined journey to the truly global information society.

The Geneva summit adopted a Declaration of Principles and comprehensive Plan of Action. The main objectives of the Tunis phase, apart from addressing the outstanding issues from the Geneva summit, were to deepen understanding and dialogue on key elements of the information society, engage all stakeholders and ensure that the actions recommended in Geneva would be implemented, allowing many people around the world, especially in developing countries, to benefit from the WSIS process.

This Summit is truly unique, in several aspects. Let me mention three most important ones. First, its innovative two-phase structure permitted us to graduate, in a very visible and tangible way, from initial exploratory attempts to find workable approaches to these problems, to a mature process of addressing profound issues and building on commonalities and shared interests.

Second, despite some difficulties and disappointments, this Summit and its preparatory process are distinguished by truly breakthrough character of the engagement of non-governmental partners. Indeed, the WGIG set a benchmark for an inclusive, participatory and productive multi-stakeholder interaction.

Third – and most important – the distinctive nature of this Summit was that here in Tunis we truly look forward into the future, we are laying a foundation of the information society that we must build together. The Tunis Summit is not the response to a problem, but rather to a challenge to bring better lives to people all around the world.

Implementation and follow up to the Summit decisions will require continued engagement, participation and leadership of all stakeholders; governments, business, academia, civil society and international organizations. The Tunis Summit "Golden Book of Initiatives" is a first and important step in implementing WSIS outcomes.

The WSIS Tunis summit is a critical milestone, not only for advancement of the information society, but also in making progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Throughout the WSIS process, and in the outcome documents from both the Geneva and Tunis summits, the developmental aspects of ICTs have been highlighted and strong links have been made with the Millennium Development Goals and their review process.

During Phase II, we have also made significant progress on the two outstanding issues from the Geneva Summit with the help of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms and the Working Group on Internet Governance.

The creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund, with its voluntary and innovative nature, should bring new momentum in bridging the digital divide on the local and municipal level. I wish the Fund, as well as other innovative mechanisms, success in pursuing its important mission.

Regarding Internet governance, the WSIS process has been the first time that representatives from all stakeholder groups have come together in a universal forum to discuss these issues. The Internet, which is increasingly considered in the context of a "global good", is a particularly multifaceted issue in which different stakeholder groups have played and will continue to play important and distinct roles.

At this stage, I would like to thank all those who have worked with me over the past 16 months, starting with all of the bureau members, consisting of representatives of 32 countries, and particularly the regional coordinators from the delegations of Ghana, Nicaragua, Canada, Pakistan and Serbia and Montenegro. My special thanks go to the Group of Friends as well as the chairs of the subcommittees who invested so much wisdom and energy leading negotiations on substantive issues; Ambassador Ileana di Giovan from Argentina, Ambassador Masood Khan from Pakistan and Mrs. Lyndall Shope-Mafole, Director General of the Department of Communications of South Africa. My thanks go also to the Chair of the Prepcom of the Geneva phase, the great son of Africa, Mr. Adama Samassekou who actively followed the preparatory process and did an important work behind the scenes.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of ITU, Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, for his guidance and strong support during the entire preparatory period of the second phase of WSIS. ITU has been the leading UN agency in the organization of this Summit and I would like to thank all ITU staff as well as the WSIS Executive Secretariat for the immense organizational and logistical support they have provided for the various PrepComs, as well as for the Tunis Summit itself.

J'aimerais souligner, comme je l'ai fait souvent, que le processus préparatoire du SMSI a été pour moi presque aussi important que le Sommet lui-même. Le Sommet qui s'ouvre aujourd'hui, dure trois jours et adoptera, je l'espère, le produit de nos efforts de deux longues années, la Déclaration et le Plan d'Action de Tunis. Le Sommet se terminera vendredi soir, mais le processus innovateur que

le SMSI a créé et qui a pris forme durant ces dernières quatre années, nous a fait entrer dans une nouvelle ère des conférences internationales des Nations Unies, celle de l'implication active des autres acteurs, de la société civile et du secteur privé, dans le processus de négociation gouvernemental.

Laissez-moi donc remercier aussi - de manière chaleureuse - tous les représentants de la société civile et du secteur privé d'avoir participé activement dans la préparation du Sommet Mondial sur la Société de l'Information et d'avoir relevé avec nous le défi de la construction d'une Société de l'Information plus inclusive, équitable et humaine.

(In Arabic) I would like to thank the Tunisian Government, host country of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, and all our Tunisian colleagues for the invaluable organizational and logistical work in the preparation of the First and Resumed PrepCom-3 and of the Tunis Summit. This has only been possible due to the great hospitality and generosity of the Tunisian Government and people.