

## **TakingITGlobal**

### **YOUTH INPUT**

#### **Introduction**

#### **1. The information society is a global society.**

More than ever before, information, finance and ideas online have little regard for national borders. There is a pressing need for public understanding of and policy response to the changes impacting our society, politics, culture, and environment: a cohesive vision of where we are heading and a road-map to guide the path towards our goals for a sustainable society must be created. Given the global nature of the information society, a mutual exchange must take place and a firm commitment must be made at a global level to be effective in achieving these goals.

#### **2. The WSIS – an important opportunity**

The World Summit on the Information Society is an important opportunity to develop policies, create commitments, and forge partnerships to harness the full potential of digital applications for human development. At the Summit, the world must promise education, employment and investment frameworks that promote the emergence of a more equitable information society, while ensuring the information society does not have unintended negative consequences such as human exploitation, privacy invasion or environmental degradation. Above all, the WSIS must see that our global information society becomes evermore people-centred and participative - a society where individual learning and expression, relevant local content, cultural diversity and citizen-engagement are valued and nurtured.

#### **3. An information society without young people?**

Yes, it would be hard to imagine! We believe that young people, not technology, are the world's largest untapped resource in maximizing the potential of an information society. A huge and growing demographic, we make up the majority of the population in Asia, and more than two-thirds of the population of some developing nations. Young people have too often been seen as a burden rather than an asset, a group to be taught but not to teach, and to receive but not to give. However, technology is changing this paradigm. After all young people, the first generation to have grown up with the Internet, have a lot to offer: energy, enthusiasm, and above all expertise to help bridge the digital divide. Young people have been at the forefront of almost every innovation in the development of the information society, from the founding of Microsoft through to the dot.com era.

#### **4. The WSIS needs young people**

Youth need to be engaged in decision-making processes related to the information society. As students who rely on the best possible preparation for participation in a ‘knowledge society’, and as citizens with an affinity for technology, we are informed stakeholders in the evolution of education and champions of innovation.

Youth are central to the information society. Younger people are heavily represented in almost every category of information society work – from the development of software products, the establishment of technology infrastructure, the development of internet communities, to new media, cultural expression, and entertainment. In many sectors, new information-based technologies are introduced to organizations through young professional staff members – reinventing enterprises, government processes and development programs. If the WSIS is to achieve its ambitious goals, it must address young people’s needs and issues, and co-opt their energy and expertise.

Youth – at least those that know about it - are taking the Summit seriously. Established at the first preparatory committee meeting, the Youth Caucus has mobilized hundreds of young ICT leaders within a number of regional groupings. Organized online via Internet mailing lists at a national, regional, and global level, activities include development of platforms, preparation of written input, participation at all WSIS meetings, and the development of national youth information society campaigns. We are also working closely with those business, government and non-government organizations from which we draw membership to provide efficient and effective input to assist the Summit process.

## **5. Young people already matching policy input with ACTION**

At the same time, we are not relying on (or at least waiting for) the political declaration to include recognition of and support for youth efforts before we take action. Taking a practical approach, we have been using the WSIS to mobilize support for concrete youth initiatives and partnership-based projects that build capacity amongst youth organizations and deliver concrete results.

At Prepcom 2, a number of our members will together officially launch the *Youth Creating Digital Opportunities Framework*, a collaborative strategy designed to support youth efforts through networking and learning (online community, information-sharing, support for young researchers), advocacy (participation in decision-making processes such as WSIS), and concrete projects (brokering of technical and financial assistance, including grants and awards to scale up and replicate youth-led initiatives and form relationships with ‘mainstream’ ICT programs).

Prepcom 2 will provide an opportunity to further develop the program beyond the seed coalition members and supporters.

## **6. Introducing a youth perspective to the document**

We believe that given the important role young people play within the information society, and that many of the key issues (education, employment) are often considered by governments as “youth issues”, reference to young people needs to be made at two levels.

First, young people need to be mainstreamed throughout the document with their needs highlighted and included within each relevant area – for example, as students, as recipients of health care services, as a force to mobilize around creating access, and as young citizens interacting with government.

Second, young people need a specific reference in the document – in the Vision and/or the Action Plan highlighting their role in ICTs development, providing concrete support and commitments related to youth participation in realizing objectives set by the Summit, and noting the ‘future orientation’ of the WSIS – it is about planning ahead and establishing a legacy for generations to come,

### **Creating a vision for the information society**

#### **A participatory and empowering society**

Our vision is for a participatory and sustainable information society, where citizens are empowered to influence and contribute to the development of their local and global communities – both online and offline - by developing content, celebrating diversity, learning for life, connecting with government, and using technology and information to better address global problems. Our vision is underpinned by participation, transparency, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights.

#### **An accessible society**

We must ensure equitable access to all aspects of an information society - people cannot be left behind. We understand the digital divide is largely a social divide and that an information society and its potential to help solve world wide problems will never be fully realized while populations remain hungry, while children do not learn to read, while women and girls are discriminated against, while health care is poor and the threat of war is present.

#### **A paradigm shift in society – more than just technology**

An information society is about much more than laying telephone lines and installing computers in schools. Creating equitable access to technology is vitally important, however, technology and its use must be considered in the social context. We need to determine how technology will be used as a tool to create desirable conditions for social development. –This must happen on two levels: 1) in terms of identifying the defining characteristics of the emerging information society, in contrast with the traditional model of society, and 2) in terms of the principles and philosophies underlying our commitment that will set the ground for development of national and global policies.

#### **A society of information abundance, created and controlled by people**

In our vision of the Information Society, people are empowered by their access to and control of information. Whereas in the industrial society, information was scarce and access came at a premium, in the new information society the problem is more likely to be information overload. Barriers to entry such as education, cost, and distribution are no longer major difficulties. Increased literacy means more people can create content, documenting their stories, presenting new ideas, highlighting their cultures. And new technologies mean content can be infinitely copied electronically and instantaneously distributed to and accessed from locations anywhere in the world. A special importance will lie in the field of management of information and data.

#### **A society of cultural diversity and creativity**

In our vision of the Information Society, local cultures are revitalized as people create local online content. In the industrial society, culture was relegated to institutions – art galleries, museums, movie theatres, and mass media. It was controlled by a small number of major companies, editors, and producers. Less sources of content meant less cultural and linguistic diversity. In the

Information Society, the tools to record, preserve and distribute culture are easily accessible. Indeed, entertainment and culture is seen increasingly as a participative rather than passive activity.

### **A society of interaction and community**

In our vision of the Information Society, people have an enhanced sense of community through online interaction. As more people interact with each other, create and share content, “information” which was previously considered a static resource becomes more mobile and facilitating to a creative community. Online communities are not merely substitutes for real-life interaction, but a powerful opportunity for new interaction based on common interest, a place for lifelong learning. Online communities can also help reinforce, connect and preserve physical community identities - providing a place for publishing local content, sharing stories, discussing issues and developing solutions to local challenges. As people’s daily lives are increasingly busy and fragmented, online communities can provide a point of reference and continuity.

### **A ‘global village’**

In our vision of the Information Society, the ‘global village’ enhances people’s international outlook, ingrains a sense of solidarity with people of other cultures, and supports new mechanisms to address global challenges by joint efforts. Online communication can happen just as easily with someone across the world as across the street, and through personal communication, citizens can gain a better understanding of other cultures and daily challenges, reducing conflict and fostering collaboration. Citizens are able to connect more effectively with governments and international institutions such as the United Nations to contribute to solving global problems.

## **Action Plan for an Empowering Information Society**

### **1. Access and Connectivity**

The Summit must commit to bridging the digital divide, ensuring everyone has access to the information society.

- a. Basic conditions must exist as pre-requisites for an information society, such as education (especially literacy), peace, healthcare, and a sustainable environment, and we commit to achieving the millennium development goals while recognizing that ICTs can be important tools for poverty reduction and environmental protection.
- b. An enabling framework is essential to bridge the digital divide. To do so, we see the “Global Deal” as a major component: This means the co-financing of development in poor countries by rich countries, reciprocated by the adoption of certain standards. A positive example of Co-Financing Mechanisms is the Co-Financing practiced within the Enlargement Process of the European Union.
- c. In providing access to information, it is vital to use the most appropriate technologies available, not simply the latest, broadest, or most advanced. Empowering “low-tech” technologies can include community radio and community networks, portable media such as videos and tapes, and even the telephone. While it is recognized such technologies do not all match the interactive and social nature of the Internet, they are all aural technologies accessible to the illiterate.

- d. Private sector investment within/by small-to-medium-sized-enterprises should be encouraged in the information society, including through the increased provision of micro-credit. Large scale initiatives by governments or business can only go so far – for the information society to reach the village level and for communications technologies to become ubiquitous, local entrepreneurs are required to champion and market the products, and we encourage the growth of the open-source software movement to provide flexible and economical solutions to worldwide markets.

## **2. Content**

- a. One of the most exciting opportunities presented by the Internet is the low cost of entry to producing content; In contrast with previous mediums requiring large investment in fixed-cost items such as television transmission licenses, newspaper printing machines, or distribution systems, the Internet makes publishing possible at a fraction of these costs. Promoting the development of expression online, and ensuring it remains free and accessible must be one of our key goals. An ‘information society’ must include a public space for the free exchange of information and ideas.
- b. While our world is becoming a ‘global community’ through enhanced communications, we also have a heightened sense of belonging to a local community or place. Providing and encouraging creation of local content in local languages on the Internet, such as helping citizens interact with government services, access local news, experience their own culture and monitor environmental conditions is vital to ensure the information society becomes relevant to people’s day-to-day lives.
- c. We recognize the importance of content creators, for-profit and not-for-profit. All countries have their own valuable local cultural traditions to cherish. We believe that the quality and diversity of local content for new interactive mediums will be a key indicator of our readiness for an information society. Community and Public Service Broadcasters, key institutions in the new information society, have an important role to play in championing local content and developing services. Where appropriate they should extend and repurpose their services from television and radio to digital interactive media. Furthermore, content will be an increasingly important sector in the knowledge economy, and all nations should place emphasis on the development of home-grown content industries including broadcasters, educators, journalists, film-makers and academics. Without such industries, the most successful content producers with large home-markets will dominate content worldwide. In this regard, we endorse the concept of local content quotas combined with government incentives to preserve and promote local cultural identity and locally relevant information.

## **3. Education**

- a. The information society also requires pervasive change in our approach to education. As some of the jobs of the future are yet to be invented, it is unlikely that tomorrow’s workforce will stay in the same job or even the same sector for long. Students will require generic and transferable skills in the areas of literacy, communication, research, science, languages, technology, as well as the development of an open mind and adaptability.

- b. Our formal education system is changing from being teacher driven to student driven. With more information easily accessible through a simple Internet search than could ever be imparted by a teacher, providing context that allows students to decipher relevance and meaning from any media or medium – helping students turn information into knowledge – must become a key goal of the formal education system.
- c. Technology is changing the way classrooms operate, integrating multimedia textbooks, online research, and student presentations with the assistance of ICTs, making learning more interactive and participatory. The success of these programs is partly due to innovative design, and partly due to the fact that students find it natural using technology in day-to-day situations. However we recognize the same cannot always be said of teachers, and there is a need to match the integration of technology into the curriculum with more rigorous professional development. One opportunity is for students to help train their teachers in ICT matters – not only does this tap a resource existing within schools, but it builds student confidence and creates a learning community, where everyone has something to share.
- d. More informal approaches to education are also valuable in the information society, providing young people with an opportunity to learn through practical experience at voluntary non-governmental organizations, community service, and business activities. Formal education systems need more flexibility to allow students to undertake and gain credit for such activities. Peer based education, where students help students, and student exchange programs are also beneficial and popular.

#### **4. Employment**

- a. Technology has changed the structure of the economy, making many jobs obsolete and putting people out of work. Yet, the information society also increases flexibility, emphasizes collaboration over hierarchy, creates the need for ongoing learning at work, and reduces the distinction between our home and workplace. Effort and resources must be put into retraining workers for knowledge-based industries, while also recognizing the state has some responsibility for some who can not easily change occupations due to age or skills.
- b. New industries have been developed as a result of technological change, and from the hubs of Silicon Valley to Hyderabad, a higher percentage of workers in knowledge-based or high-skilled jobs. These new industries are built upon innovation, and instilling a sense of entrepreneurship. A culture of risk-taking and the skills to take an idea and turn it into a profitable venture are vital to ensure the sustained growth of these industries, and new ones not yet envisaged.
- c. Fostering entrepreneurship is vital in every part of the world and should be considered a key mechanism for development. Supporting young entrepreneurs in the developing world with education, financing, mentorship and encouragement is a critical pathway to bridging the digital divide and fostering the creation of sustainable livelihoods. Without more effort, the huge challenge posed by the “brain drain” will continue to worsen, as those with skills leave for “refuge” in greener pastures where their skills are valued can be utilized and employment is more plentiful.

#### **5. Health**

- a. Information is a powerful tool for health promotion, prevention and care. We must use all available communications technologies for the distribution of information related to priority health concerns, such as HIV/AIDS, family planning, hygiene and sanitation, and drug use. Information and communications technologies can be harnessed to assist in the provision of medical care and services, including the use of video conferencing to connect specialist virtual doctors to patients at remote or under-resourced community health facilities.
- b. At the same time, we recognize the many health concerns specifically associated with the information society and the knowledge-based economy. These including obesity caused through lack of exercise, vision impairment and chiropractic problems caused by computer usage, and potentially carcinogenic effects of electronic radiation. We must promote awareness of these ailments, enable further research of related health concerns and develop strategies to reduce their prevalence.

## **6. Multilingualism**

- a. Our world's more than 6000 languages are an integral part of our culture, heritage and individual national identities. Yet, as English increasingly dominates as the international language especially on the Internet, there is a difficulty in finding and navigating online content in our own native languages. Without a major place within this new medium of choice, our languages may slip from day-to-day usage. Many are already on the endangered list. Consequently, we must support the development of local content industries, encourage our own native-language national broadcasters, and ensure that government information is translated into multiple languages. We can also harness technology to help achieve this goal, through the use of machine translation – investment in the development of this technology would improve its effectiveness and accuracy.

## **7. Women and Girls in the Information Society**

Integration of young women and girls' input, creativity, communication styles and values into all areas of the Information Society is elementary for it to be inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

Young women and girls are underrepresented in many areas of information and communication technologies. In order to suppress this tendency, the barriers facing young women and girls in this area must be identified and removed. Further, suspected and confirmed causes of these impeding trends, customs, myths or realities must be identified and removed in order to facilitate complete inclusion of young women and girls in the Information Society. As these barriers vary from region to region, national and global level action needs to be taken with this goal in mind.

Young women and girls are the greatest source of information about the kinds of values, activities and support they can provide and need to receive in the Information Society. Young women and girls must be actively engaged in the forming stages of the Information Society.

The number of female representatives in high level government and private sector positions may indicate a country's progressiveness in gender issues. Having high-profile role models of one's gender in all sectors of the Information Society, plays an important role in the choice of young people to contribute to the development of the Information Society. Thus, we encourage

regulatory frameworks that will ensure presence of women and girls at all levels and in all areas of the emerging Information Society.

In order to highlight their importance, gender issues are often distinguished from general dialogue on the values to be adopted in the Information Society (as, for e.g., in this discussion). However, this separation may also reinforce the notion of women as an unconventional segment of the information society. Care needs to be taken in order to promote a gender balance in all aspects of the Information Society without further marginalizing this important stakeholder group.

## **8. Environment**

- a. While the information society was originally meant to herald the development of a paperless world, the result has not been positive for the environment. Indeed, paper usage has more than doubled with the widespread use of sophisticated printers and copiers. This rebound-effect is also experienced e.g. in the field of transport or electronic waste. A global framework should be established, which creates prices that internalise costs for the global common goods. Thus it can be guaranteed, that innovations which are to be expected further contribute to environmental decrease rather than help to solve environmental problems.
- b. Other major environmental concerns include the use of rare minerals in computer circuitry, mining for which is destroying unique rainforest and the habitat of endangered species. The short usable life-span of computers also creates masses of waste products full of heavy metals, plastics and glass for landfill. We commit to encouraging the computer recycling industry and strict enforcement of related health and safety legislation.

## **9. Safeguarding the vulnerable & Privacy issues**

- a. Recognizing that global communications have enabled the growth of a cyber-pornography industry degrading to all, we will take action to bring access in line with community expectations, underlined by a belief that the most effective barriers to access are personal initiative and parental control. Illegal pornography can never be tolerated and we must redouble efforts to shut-down this illegal industry and the related international trafficking of women and children.
- b. We believe that online privacy is a basic human right, and we support any practice or law that respects this right. We recognize the importance of storing Internet usage data by governments and ISPs, with use of such data responsibly restricted to court-authorized searches.

## **10. Governance**

- a. The concept of governance extends beyond decision-making within formal government structures. It includes how decisions are made within and between all institutions - including corporations, civil society organizations and intergovernmental agencies. The information society provides an opportunity to require greater transparency from and interaction with all institutions with public roles and responsibilities.



- b. Due to a close interconnectedness between globalization and ICT use, problems in the Information Society no longer arise on national levels, but on a global level. Therefore, we encourage the strengthening of existing global government systems to address the challenges of today.
- c. Increasing government communication and service delivery online can make governments more efficient, transparent and accountable to their citizens. Governments should develop comprehensive websites with clear system to navigate through the many policies, programs, and services they offer. All governments should aim to provide tools and online forms to support tax payments, social security, and other common transactions. Specific information in a clear manner explaining government policies and laws helps make politics more accessible. Online publishing of information such as budgets, ministerial reviews, and transcripts of parliamentary debate helps keep governments accountable to their electors.
- d. We encourage the utilization of technology to make voting processes more responsive, accessible and efficient for citizens of all ages, especially the increasingly disengaged group of young voters.

## **11. The world's biggest untapped resource: YOUTH**

- a. The world's largest untapped resource in creating an information society is not technology, but young people. Youth are a huge and growing demographic, making up more than two-thirds of the population of some developing nations. Yet, young people have too often been seen as a burden rather than an asset, a group to be taught but not to teach, and to receive but not to give. We must all commit to working with youth to change this paradigm. Youth need to be engaged in decision-making processes related to the information society – as students, and as citizens with an affinity for technology, they are informed stakeholders in the evolution of education and innovation. We commit to supporting youth efforts and engaging them as participants in broader initiatives towards realizing digital opportunities and an information society for all.

**This Youth Input was collated based on youth input at Prepcom 1, the Content and Themes Meeting, the Bucharest Regional Meeting of the WSIS, the African youth e-conference and the World Telecom Youth Forum.**

**For more information please contact [nick@takingitglobal.org](mailto:nick@takingitglobal.org)**

**To join the Youth Caucus, visit <http://www.yahoogroups.com/wsisyouth/>**

## **E-CONFERENCE STATEMENT**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held online at [www.yahoogroups.com/group/wsisyouthafrica](http://www.yahoogroups.com/group/wsisyouthafrica) between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2002. It was co-ordinated by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and ninety-six (96) young Africans from over 13 countries (from Western, Eastern, Central, Northern and Southern Africa) participated in the eConference which sought to strengthen the role of African Youths in the WSIS processes, and the eventual action plans that will be drawn.

### **2.0 Preamble**

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is an initiative of the United Nations. It seeks to provide a framework for governments, non-government organizations and associations, companies and others to address the following question: What values and actions do we embrace to ensure that the Information Society becomes a vehicle for democracy, justice, equality, and respect for personal and social development?

The world's youth rose to this challenge (of building a truly democratic and all-involving Information Society) with the establishment of a Youth Caucus, formed at the first preparatory committee meeting of the WSIS held in Geneva between July 1 and 5, 2002. The youth of Africa are actively involved in this task of building a sustainable tomorrow, coming together as an African Youth Caucus, which is the regional extension of the global Youth Caucus.

### **3.0 Participants of the eConference:**

#### **3.1 *Recognizing:***

- that Africa has a lot to contribute to the Information Society, and a lot to benefit from it too,
- that we have had much of discussions in Africa but need to move on to acting out our recommendations
- that today's African youth is tomorrow's African leader, policy maker, parent and responsible citizen,
- that Africa's youth are at a strategic position to see to Africa's inclusion and active participation in the Information Society
- the various efforts taken by Africa's peoples towards bridging Africa's inter- and intra-digital divide, including but not limited to:
  - the Bamako 2002 African preparatory meeting to the WSIS, May 2002.
  - the African Information Society Initiative (AISI).

**Final eConference Statement from the African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society. 20 – 30 November 2002, Online.**

- the UNESCO consultation with Civil Society conducted prior to the African WSIS Bamako preparatory meeting, May 2002.
- the various country-level and sub-regional consultations seeking to help Africa bridge the digital divide
- activities of socially responsible businesses that help bridge the digital divide
- the “Half Way Proposition” of African ISPs that seeks to drive down the cost of Internet access

**3.2 *Endorsing:***

- ITU Africa 2001 Youth (Forum) Declaration, Johannesburg, November 2001.
- WSIS Youth Caucus Statement to *PrepCom 1*, Geneva, July 2002.
- The Bamako 2002 Declaration – African preparatory meeting to the WSIS, May 2002.

**3.3 *Made the following recommendations:***

**1. EDUCATION & ILLITERACY**

In Africa (and around the world), the challenge of cultivating an educated society is an enormous task and the issue of ICTs for Education is a good development to help facilitate the education of entire societies as well as nations in Africa via its boundless and resourceful nature.

The creation of multimedia learning experience is vital to education and illiteracy too. They help facilitate learning and motivate learning. The creation of local content of educational material must also be encouraged.

The above-mentioned are issues that have to be addressed in Government policies and provision of basic infrastructure, the active social responsibility and participation of the private sector in terms of resources, training and financing ICTs for education, the creation of governing boards through the partnership of the government, private sector and civil society towards educational development.

**Final eConference Statement from the African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society. 20 – 30 November 2002, Online.**

**2. CONTENT & RURAL INCLUSION**

With the help of Information and Communication Technologies, nations have been "rebuilt" and "reprofiled". It has become imperative for nations, organisations, governments and individuals to be reborn into a new citizenship, as citizens of a global community. The results of such citizenship have far reaching influence than a National passport could give. However, while the stage is being set for opportunities, our Africa seems to be relaxed and not assuming its role as a major contributor to the new community.

Africa must strive to stamp her authority on the Internet, which is presently dominated by "foreign" languages. Ensuring the availability of online local content will help Africa's people to push their offers to the same platform where they have pulled information. To ensure rural inclusion, online content should be made available offline through the use of compact discs, print media, community radios and other media that can bring information to the rural areas.

**3. GENDER & ICTS**

Africa cannot afford to ignore the potential contributions of her women. The Information Society must be gender-sensitive and African women must be empowered and given the opportunity to express their knowledge and expertise without undue discrimination. We believe that young women must be encouraged to see beyond the false mystery of ICTs and pursue their desires while using ICTs as tools to achieve such purposes.

The formation of gender caucuses is encouraged as it will help stimulate the need for women's involvement at the highest level possible in the emerging Information Society. An equipped generation of young women will surely produce a new generation of mothers who train their kids with ICT tools. Knowing that rural women are the most disadvantaged (but yet can lead an effective revolution in the integration of ICTs into the society), they have to cross the barrier of not just a new technology but also traditions and culture which has a stronger hold in the rural areas.

**4. HEALTH**

Africa has lost enough people to various health problems that could have been prevented if the right information was made available at the right time – and to the right people. Politically motivated expenditure and projects have to be stopped, as a first step to addressing relevant and realistic needs. Priority must be given to access to quality health care delivery systems, and it is necessary to address pressing health issues using the very best of technology associated to health.

HIV/AIDS awareness campaign has employed the use of ICTs and it has been proven to be effective with evidence in declining prevalence rates in some African countries. It is wise therefore to upgrade the awareness campaign of preventive measures against other pressing health issues on the

**Final eConference Statement from the African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society. 20 – 30 November 2002, Online.**

continent like malaria, polio, etc. All attempts to introduce and sustain the quality that will be achieved through the use of ICTs in health must be evidently accessible in terms of location and cost.

## **5. BRAIN DRAIN**

The issue of brain drain is very prevalent in developing worlds. This worm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the African nations has to be addressed. It is a menace that has left Africa behind in substantial development with a lot of skilled Africans seeking *refuge* living outside the continent.

Youths must be empowered in entrepreneurship with the availability of relevant mentorship and we must embrace ICT in our educational system, as it is a sure way of reaching the grassroots with globally competitive information. We also cannot leave all the work to the government, we must begin to think of what we can contribute to Africa and not only what we can get from her. If Africa's people, private sector, civil society and governments collaboratively create an enabling environment, the brain drain phenomenon can be reversed, with Africa benefiting from the wealth of her own!

## **6. WAR & ICTS**

While we do not deny the existence of wars and unpeaceful practices in some countries in Africa, we also acknowledge the role that proper information can play in promoting peace. We believe that at the root of every rivalry is some misunderstanding, which is traceable to information manipulation. If the proper information is made available (using both old and new ICTs) peaceful resolution will be an evident option in conflicts between nations, individuals and groups.

African governments must embrace the potentials of ICTs in order to promote peace and ensure that misinformation does not end in uprisings or unpeaceful practices. From the email announcing the resolution of boundary issues to the town crier's message of peace, both old and new media will help Africa in its battle against wars and hope for peace.

## **7. ACCESS**

One of the priorities of the WSIS is 'to promote the urgently needed access of all the world's inhabitants to ICTs for development'. This involves the provision of affordable and appropriate ICT infrastructure. ICTs have the potential of increasing the rate and levels of human development in Africa especially by interconnecting and the rest of the world into a unified society but the uneven distribution of both the ICT tools and ICT skills should be addressed. This uneven distribution is notable between developing nations and the developed world as well within African nations; where the digital divide is apparent between rural and urban areas, based on gender, literacy levels and other factors.

**Final eConference Statement from the African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society. 20 – 30 November 2002, Online.**

In order to improve access to ICTs in Africa, inclusive ICT policies should be developed in a participatory manner. Governments should subsidise access for the poor and funding for infrastructure must be prioritised, competition between service providers should be encouraged (in order to increase options and lower costs), deliberate attention should be given to rural/marginalised areas of Africa and gender-based barriers to access should be addressed through policy and projects.

## **8. ETHICS & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Issues of ethics and intellectual property cannot be ignored if development of ICT is to take place in our part of the world. In an environment like Africa, where systems are not in place to combat piracy, it is an uphill struggle for creative minds to enjoy the fruits of their labour. All stakeholders must ensure that the creative works produced by Africans – young or old – are protected against piracy.

While protecting the right of the innovator, ethical balances must be ensured in order not to create unpleasant bondage in the name of protection.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

As young people and true citizens of Africa, we commit to the emergence of the Africa of our dreams one that we can be proud to call home. Based on our discussions, we have decided to:

- continue deliberations on this statement in order to produce a workable plan of action,
- identify, encourage and network existing youth-led initiatives that tie into the objectives of the Information Society,
- partner with existing networks, organisations and agencies in order to realise Information Society-specific objectives as it relates to Africa,
- encourage national-level consultations between youth and government to accelerate Africa's involvement in the WSIS, and
- hold our governments responsible (in such manners as are appropriate) for their duties as the custodians of much of our nation's resources.

## ITU TELECOM ASIA

### First Youth Forum Declaration 2002

The digital divide has many faces. It may involve inequality based on socio-economic standing, geographical location, gender, age or physical ability.

We see that the most important aspects of the digital divide in priority order are:

1. **ICT Literacy** – the ability to operate technology effectively and having technology that is user-friendly when we consider that the user may be disadvantaged by factors such as age and physical ability.
2. **Access** – the ability to access technology as regards infrastructure, economical factors and standardization.
3. **Cultural issues** – such as gender, language, traditions and customs, ethnicity and social standing.

### Our vision

Our vision is a world in which the digital divide has been bridged, where communication is a fundamental right, a world where we become closer in a global human network. In the following declaration we will demonstrate how we may achieve our vision.

### Our mission

We, the youth have been born into a world where ICT is fundamental to social and economic development. It is our generation which is the main source of ICT knowledge and innovation. We have the ability and the duty to bridge the digital divide through ICT literacy. We will share our knowledge with our communities through education and the development of new user-friendly technologies to ensure that everyone is ICT literate.

We, the youth will encourage the developed countries to invest in and cooperate with developing countries in order to build infrastructure for a global human network. This network will be accessible and affordable to everyone allowing free exchange of information and knowledge, thus fostering the economies of all our countries.

We, the youth will make every effort to effect the formation of regulatory policy frameworks to promote moral use of ICT and ensure accessibility and availability of ICT on a non-discriminatory basis. The policies will aim to preserve local cultures, as we become part of a global society. ICT will also be used to create awareness of environmental issues.

### Our Recommendations

To commit what we have suggested these are our immediate recommendations:

- ☐ We encourage the youth to mobilize to build transnational and cross-cultural networks for the purpose of having effective dialogue and collaboration on a regular basis. This will enable us to have our voices to be heard in shaping policy and directing the future of the ICT industry and society as a whole.

- We advocate young people bringing their talents, energy and innovative ideas to the ICT field. Further, we encourage young professionals to embrace the global human network and develop community-oriented content for the benefit of a community as a whole while retaining cultural identity.
- We encourage the youth to take initiatives in bringing greater social awareness into policy-making regarding resource allocation and development of infrastructure in the ICT sector. Youth will play a greater leadership role in socially-aware enterprises, narrowing the gap, making ICT more equal and inclusive for all.
- We urge the ITU to continue to promote a competitive climate within ICT industry to ensure that users will gain the benefit of technology at increasingly lower prices. Competition will also help to stimulate products and services innovations to increasingly meet the specific needs of people, giving them the ability to better communicate and thereby bridge the digital divide.
- We strongly urge the ITU development sector to invest in youth by continuing to support youth for a and other youth involvement in ICT activities. This produces socially aware young leaders who are empowered to fulfill our stated mission.

(Hong Kong, Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 2002)