United Nations ICT Task Force

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE

INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)

I. Background

The General Assembly, by its resolution 56/183, has recommended an intergovernmental preparatory process with active participation and direct contributions on the part of other stakeholders in the WSIS process. The report of the Secretary-General of the ITU on preparations for the WSIS indicates that the United Nations Information and Communications Technologies Task Force is "expected to play a particular and significant role in the preparatory process for the Summit".

The United Nations ICT Task Force, established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and its Working Groups and Regional Nodes are addressing broad issues related to information and communication technologies (ICT) and their socio-economic impact, in particular in the context of promoting development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This work is enhanced by the Task Force's multi-stakeholder composition, broad mandate and its open, inclusive and decentralized approach to advancing the ICT-for-development agenda.

II.   Elements of United Nations ICT Task Force's contribution to the WSIS

The Task Force can thus bring a unique perspective to issues addressed at the Summit. It can bring the following assets to the Summit:

- Intellectual leadership with regard to issues and themes;
- An open and transparent forum for exchange of views;
- Communications channels through its existing matrix of Working Groups and Regional Nodes;
- Capacity to champion ICT-enabled development focus; and

- Catalytic function leading to practical ICT-for-development initiatives.

    The Task Force is in a position to support the Summit in:
    a) securing high-level multi-stakeholder participation in the Summit;
    b) making available its matrix of Working Groups, Regional Nodes and other stakeholder networks for articulating and channeling inputs to the Summit, particularly from developing countries (e.g. contributions of African Stakeholder Network to the WSIS Regional Meeting for Africa in Mali and of the Task Force's European Node to the European Regional Meeting in Bucharest);
    c) contribution to the WSIS, the Declaration, its principles and providing themes;
    d) helping provide intellectual leadership with regards to type I and type II outcomes of the WSIS.

In particular, the role of "ICT Policy and Governance" and "National and Regional E-Strategies" as critical pieces of the ICT-for-development equation could be highlighted, while ensuring that adequate attention is given to Africa. In doing so, the United Nations ICT Task Force may organize one or more events incorporating these themes within the framework of the WSIS. This could serve as an opportunity to:

- Present information materials and case studies resulting from, for example, United Nations ICT Task Force Working Groups, in particular that of Working Group 1 (ICT Policy and Governance) and Working Group 2 (National and Regional E-Strategies). The Working Groups could present best practices, provide for exchange of experiences and prepare 2-3 issues papers for the WSIS as suggested in the recent New York meeting;
- Presentation of an ICT-for-development success story(ies) that will be meaningful to WSIS participants.

In addition, the need to promote connectivity, increase access and work to lower the cost of using ICT to overcome the digital divide in international development could be stressed. Working Group 5 (Low Cost Connectivity and Access) could present to the WSIS some of its initiatives, which are focusing on achieving low cost connectivity and access to ensure digital opportunities for developing countries. The Working Group could, in particular, share the results of its research outlining a migration path towards universal broadband connectivity, motivating the design of a wireless communications network, including the policy considerations for deploying this type of network in the context of rural connectivity.

At its meeting on 1 October 2002, members of the Task Force have decided to provide a substantive contribution to the preparatory process of the WSIS, including preparation of its outcomes (Declaration and Plan of Action), the 2003 Summit itself and its follow-up leading to the 2005 Summit, with a view to a further sharpening of the focus of the Summit, defining a vision and helping develop an inclusive and universal approach to information society. The present paper is derived in part from inputs received from

individual members of the Task Force, its Working Groups and Regional Nodes as well as other stakeholder networks. Full texts of proposals put forward by various Task Force members are contained in annexes.

III. Mission of the Summit: formulation of a response to the societal challenges of the information revolution

The ICT revolution has fundamentally changed the way the world works. The networked economy and society are rapidly taking shape, but the changes have happened so fast that their character and implications are neither clear nor well understood. Most importantly, we still have a long way to go in understanding how ICT can help in the greatest challenge we face today – the enhancement of global well-being.

The explosive progress in ICT has unleashed forces and trends – in the economic, social, cultural, political, security and other spheres – the full societal impact of which is still unfolding. At the same time, WSIS comes after the IT sector peaked, after the bubble has burst. IT is no longer at the top of the radar screen for politicians as it once was. There is certain benefit in this situation, however, since now IT is perceived as it should have been perceived always – as an instrument to empower development, create new opportunities. This perception should be the guiding light for the WSIS. The Summit presents a unique opportunity to work out a globally shared assessment of the nature of the phenomenon, develop a common definition of an information society that humanity should aspire to create, and outline a plan of concerted action, involving all stakeholders, to achieve the agreed objective.

A broadly shared definition of the information society will enable national policy makers to deal most effectively and in a properly coordinated way with the inherently global dynamics that underlie the increasingly important role of ICT in all aspects of modern-day life. Information society has a digital nervous system which utilizes ICT resources to further progress through knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and its applications to advance human well-being.

The information society must be inclusive and universal. The global information society must be a society that tears down the present barriers to understanding and tolerance, a society where opportunities for the disadvantaged and marginalized would be fostered, a society where information would nurture sharing and mutual comprehension.

The information society should contribute to what the United Nations Secretary-General has termed "inclusive globalization, whose purpose lies not only in opening markets, but in expanding opportunity and promoting cooperation", since "the globalization of economies and societies is supported and sustained by a 'globalization of community'."

Members of the Task Force are convinced that the Summit should contribute to strengthening multilateralism, adding further gravitas to the role of the United Nations system in addressing the most pressing issue that humanity faces today – the problem of

poverty. The Summit can provide a truly multi-stakeholder platform, with participation of Heads of State and Government, CEOs from the private sector, heads of NGOs and other civil society organizations, and representatives of media organizations. The principal objective of the Summit should be identification of strategies and actions that would mainstream ICT into the work aimed at achieving the MDGs. It is only in that wider social, economic and political context that a summit-level participation could be justified and assured.

IV.   Core strategy and priority areas of the Summit

Lessons of the recent summits, in particular the WSSD, are that if a summit is about everything, it is ultimately about little. Also, a tendency of some recent global conferences was to add new layers of decisions and plans of action to those that were adopted earlier but remain unfulfilled. This tends to send confusing, sometimes contradictory, signals to the world, in particular to developing countries that need to focus their scarce resources on clearly identified priority issues. The potential for a WSIS agenda of virtually unlimited scope has raised concern. It is therefore strongly recommended that the preparatory process results in an identification of and a focus on a set of priority issues that highlight the fundamental building blocks of an information society. Focusing on these priority issues will create a meaningful framework for demonstrable progress towards the long-term sustainability of a truly global information society.

The Task Force strongly recommends that the core strategy of the Summit be geared to ensuring that ICT are effectively mainstreamed into the development policies and programmes of governments and international organizations, and that the MDGs serve as a paramount objective. One of the advantages of this approach would be that it would make the agenda of the Summit focused and action-oriented and would help overcome a fragmented view of thinking about ICT that is present today and promote viewing them more as a thread that cuts across all other sectors as an enabler of development. This would not, of course, preclude the coverage of issues that various interest groups would wish to include in the Summit.

In order to further the core strategy, the Task Force could work towards spelling out how ICT can help advance development and promote the MDGs. The Task Force could, upon request, help countries monitor their progress towards the achievement of the MDGs by devising an MDG-ICT matrix and a template for countries to develop "score cards" that would be used by individual countries as benchmarks to help them assess their progress towards MDGs. The Task Force could use this work in its catalytic function of helping to match donor proposals to country needs. The Task Force would be prepared to convene a group of advisors to prepare a framework paper outlining a matrix of links among ICT and MDGs and to work on the score card concept.

In particular, health and education are understood as fundamental to development. It should be noted that a majority of the eight MDGs concern health and education and that ICT can make an essential contribution worldwide to effective education and health

systems and the efficient and equitable delivery of health and education services. The WSIS provides an opportunity to make real progress in outlining and agreeing on the collaborative action needed to use today's knowledge, tools and technologies in the service of health and education for development.

The WHO (Joint Chair of Health subcommittee of Working Group 3 of the Task Force) has reiterated its offer to the WSIS secretariat to make available its technical expertise to address ICT and health as part of the WSIS.

The Summit should address ways of putting in place a regulatory environment that will encourage competition and build incentives for the private sector to deliver services more effectively to address the financial, technical and social barriers, especially in developing and least developed countries. This activity should be undertaken collaboratively between donors, multilateral institutions, governments, the private sector and civil society. The pro-poor dimension of e-inclusion, e-governance, e-learning, e-health and entrepreneurship should receive particular attention to ensure that measures taken within these themes bring real benefit to poor people.

The achievement of Summit goals should be founded on existing good practice developed through the G8-initiated DOT Force, the United Nations ICT Task Force and similar initiatives. The Action Plan of both the United Nations ICT Task Force and the DOT Force reflect the international consensus on key priority areas for ICT-for-development. It is recommended that the WSIS also adopt these internationally recognized areas, specifically:

National and Regional E-Strategies: to address the need for a transparent and inclusive process for the early/forward-looking development and deployment of national e-strategies that must include the participation of all stakeholders from government, private sector, civil society, and international organizations. Emphasis should be placed on the realistic prioritization, implementation, sustainability and mobilization of resources in ICT-for-development initiatives.

ICT Policy and Governance: global ICT policy and governance can either be a facilitator or a barrier for full participation in the networked world. This theme should focus on ways to enhance the capacity of developing nation stakeholders to participate in global policymaking related to ICTs with a view to building a global ICT policy environment that would be conducive for the achievement of the potential of information technology by all countries.

Human Resource and Capacity Building: to explore the potential of increasing human capacity with the help of ICTs (e-learning) and ICT skills.

Access and Connectivity: to promote connectivity, increase access and work to lower the cost of using ICTs to confront the digital divide in international development. Also promotes the creation and use of local content.

<u>Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship</u>: to develop the right policy environment for local enterprise investment and foster entrepreneurial use of ICTs to support socio-economic development.

V.   <u>Principles and themes of the Declaration and Plan of Action</u>

The **Declaration** of the Summit should be a call to action, a challenge to participants to commit themselves to the realization of the promise of the information society.

To this end, the following **principles** may be reflected, among others, in the draft Declaration:
- An open, inclusive, participatory, tolerant and universal information society;
- Concept of freedom of expression and opinion as enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Need to build a gender-sensitive information society;
- Indispensability of a multi-stakeholder approach for the achievement of an inclusive global information society;
- ICT as a strategic enabler for achieving the MDGs;
- Efforts to advance universal access to and availability of the benefits of ICT to all, as recognized in the Millennium Declaration; success in meeting this objective depends on developing a participatory and enabling policy and institutional environment at the national and international levels for ICT-for-development issues;
- Equitable access to information;
- Need to integrate media and ICT strategies into overall development strategies;
- Commitment by political leaders to promote competition and free enterprise as a preferred means of promoting the delivery of ICT services and capabilities;
- Investment in ICT capabilities constitutes an essential force in development and poverty eradication;
- Ability to create and exchange local content via ICT.

ICT-for-development should be a principal theme of the Summit. It is also important in that regard that the preparatory process ensures that adequate attention is given to Africa at the Summit. It should be noted that ICT-for-development does not automatically mean Internet. In Africa, for instance, radio is still by far the most dominant medium. Therefore, the WSIS should also consider furthering the development of traditional media and its links with the new technologies.

The following **thematic elements** are suggested for inclusion in the draft Declaration:
- Definition of the "Information Society";

- Multi-stakeholder approach to achieving an inclusive global information society;
- Role of ICT in achieving the MDGs;
- National and regional e-strategies, including media-strategies;
- ICT policy and governance;
- Human resource and capacity building;
- Access and connectivity;
- Business enterprise and entrepreneurship;
- Diversified and local content development;
- E-government.

The Declaration should address ways of putting in place a regulatory environment that will encourage competition and build incentives for the private sector to deliver services more effectively to attain the MDGs through the use of ICT. The financial, technical and social barriers, especially in developing and least developed countries, should also be discussed in the context. Developing countries should be helped to have a voice in international forums where decisions about the global information society are made. Diversified and local content development should be emphasized as an element of the Summit themes.

The WSIS should further focus on the role of government in introducing competition and providing a favorable regulatory environment to enable the development and deployment of an underlying ICT infrastructure. Governments should also lead by example, by being early adopters. Attention should also be given to the benefits of ICT applications to improve the lives of citizens, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, specifically e-government, e-health and e-learning.

The Draft **Plan of Action** should provide for clearer targets and timetables for assessing progress, accountability and results. The ICT-for-development component within the plan of action may address the following issues:

- Human and institutional capacity development;
- The imperative to finance, build and maintain an affordable ICT infrastructure;
- Expansion of services to remote and underserved populations;
- Standards, norms, laws and regulation towards free flow of information for health, education and other services;
- Training and education of the workforce, researchers and policymakers in making the best use of ICT in health, education and other services;
- Need to integrate media strategies into overall development strategies;
- Need to build gender into ICT-for-development policies and programmes;
- Measurement of the improvement of participation by developing country stakeholders in international ICT policymaking bodies;

- Measure efforts by international ICT policymaking bodies to promote awareness of the role ICT can play in development;
- Measure development of domestic policymaking and institution building processes and progress towards an open, pro-competitive environment that promotes investment and entrepreneurship;
- Enhanced awareness of political leaders of the value of ICT, evidenced by commitments to establish and implement national e-strategies within specified time periods;
- Measure the extent of integration of ICT strategies into national development strategies, including PRSP's, where these exist;
- Measure the extent of integration of ICT as an enabling instrument in ODA and development cooperation policies and programmes;
- Measure the extent and value of local content use in delivering the MDGs.

VI.   Securing high-level multi-stakeholder participation and input for the Summit

To build a powerful alliance and constituency for the Summit, in addition to adopting a Declaration and Plan of Action (Type I), WSIS should also serve as a unique partnership-making forum among governments, private sector, foundations and civil society (Type II). In this Type II role, the Summit should be seen as a kind of a market place to match partners and launch joint initiatives. For this, we need to ensure the participation and commitment of all. The multi-stakeholder character of the Task Force and the fact that it had been constituted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations equips it for a role of a broker between governments, civil society (including the private sector and non-governmental organizations) and multilateral institutions. The Task Force is offering the use of its existing matrix of multi-stakeholder working groups and regional nodes as platforms for the preparatory process for the WSIS to ensure a broad-based input, including from the private sector, foundations and NGOs.

The Regional Nodes, in particular, can serve as an effective conduit for the participation of developing nations in the WSIS process and can also play, in conjunction with the regional preparatory meetings of the WSIS, an important role in developing regional perspectives on the content and output of the Summit. Concrete modalities of utilizing the Regional Nodes and their programmes and activities for enhancing the WSIS outcome and implementing the follow-up actions would need to be further developed during the preparatory WSIS process. As one concrete proposal, Regional Nodes could, for example, carry out an assessment of city informatization development.

VII.   Organization of the preparatory process and the Summit itself;

To engage high-level participants in a meaningful exchange about the ways in which ICT can accelerate progress in reaching the MDGs, the Summit should offer a range of activities that would build awareness, create enthusiasm, promote engagement,

and result in both commitment and action on the part of the participants. Innovative partnerships, projects and initiatives could be presented at the Summit by Task Force

members. Also, virtual events could be organized and a "development bazaar" be held[1].

To provide impetus and buy-in for policy reform, a short list of the most critical steps that governments should take, at the national and international levels, to create a more hospitable environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs may be developed before the Summit.

During the Summit, a parallel event could be organized, that would examine the question of how the widespread adoption of e-business practices can contribute to increasing the opportunities for sustainable development, and how governments, the agencies of the United Nations system and partners in the private sector and the NGOs can contribute to the realization of these opportunities.

VIII. Follow-up activities leading to the 2005 Summit, including monitoring of progress in the implementation

Summit outcomes (Declaration and the Plan of Action) should have timetables and other measurement tools to assess progress, pinpoint accountability and maintain a sense of urgency.

To help monitor progress, the Summit may recommend a tool of country "score cards" (see item IV above), that would break down the broad goals and policy and resource requirements at the country level. With commitments made at the country level by the government and a concomitant commitment by the international community, real progress on applying ICT for achieving MDGs within specified timeframes should be achieved. The United Nations ICT Task Force could help establish mechanisms to monitor progress and prepare score card reports reflecting both developing and developed country performance. The second part of the Summit, in 2005 in Tunis, would be an occasion for taking stock of overall progress.

ANNEXES

1. Canada
2. Working Group 1

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[1] Originally conceptualized at the World Bank, Development Bazaars are a physical marketplace during which a number of social entrepreneurs from around the world actively promote their social projects to a team of judges. At the conclusion of the event, financial grants are awarded directly to the winning projects. This type of event has been so successful in engaging social entrepreneurs and leaders that it is now being copied worldwide. To complement the objectives of the WSIS, a Bazaar could be held that showcases projects which are using ICT as a means of achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals

3. Working Group 3
4. Working Group 5
5. Working Group 6
6. Asia Regional Node
7. Geneva Node
8. DPI
9. USCIB
10. DFID
11. UNCTAD

**UN ICT Task Force's Contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society
-- A Canadian Perspective --**

General Assembly Resolution 56/183 recommended an intergovernmental preparatory process with active participation and direct contributions on the part of other stakeholders in the WSIS process. The report of the Secretary-General of the ITU on preparations for the WSIS indicates that the United Nations Information and Communications Technologies Task Force is "expected to play a particular and significant role in the preparatory process for the Summit".

To facilitate the UN ICT's effective contribution and to provide content for the Summit, individual Task Force members, conveners of working groups and chairs of regional nodes have been asked to provide substantive input on the WSIS from their perspective and respective areas of responsibilities by November 20, 2002.

In response to this call, Canada has put forward the following set of inputs and proposals on the UN ICT Task Force's contribution to the WSIS.

UN ICT Task Force Assets

The UN ICT Task Force is established on a multi-stakeholder basis and can bring a unique perspective to issues addressed at the Summit. In its role as a broker between governments, non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, the Task Force can provide the following assets to the WSIS:

- Intellectual leadership with regard to issues and themes

- An open and transparent forum for exchange

- Communications channels through its existing matrix of Working Groups and Regional Networks

- Capacity to champion ICT-oriented development focus

- Catalytic function leading to practical ICT for development initiatives

VI.
VII. **Possible Areas of Support to WSIS**

1. *Securing Key Multi-Stakeholder Participation for the Summit* -- WSIS will provide a unique opportunity to draw to the attention of world leaders some of the key challenges and opportunities the global community faces in the implementation of ICT for Development. As mentioned, the multi-stakeholder character of the UN ICT Task Force equips it for a unique role as a broker between governments, non-governmental organizations and UN agencies. As recommended at the organization's recent New York meeting, the UN ICT Task Force may wish to leverage their influence to gain high-level attendance for the Summit and also private sector participation. It may also wish to recommend an address by a well-recognized expert of the ICT for development sector.

2. *Multi-stakeholder input through existing Working Groups and Regional Networks* -- Offering the use of its existing multi-stakeholder matrix of Working Groups and Regional Networks as platforms for the preparatory process for WSIS in ensuring a broad-based input, including from the private sector, foundations and NGOs. The Regional Networks, in particular, serve

as an exceptional conduit for the participation of developing nations in the WSIS process. Furthermore, these networks can play an important role in developing regional perspectives on the content and output of the Summit.

It is recommended that an ad hoc group be created, in order to ensure a coherent and coordinated contribution from members of the UN ICT Task Force, its Working groups and Regional Networks.

3. _Input into WSIS Declaration, Principles and Themes_ --The UN ICT Task Force can play a pivotal role in the development of outcomes such as the WSIS Declaration and, in particular, its principles and themes.

    a. Principles -- The UN ICT Task Force should encourage the adoption of the following principles within the WSIS Declaration: Principle 1\ The incorporation of the UN ICT Task Force's multi-stakeholder approach as a key principle to achieving an inclusive global information society; Principle 2\ ICT as a means to achieving Millenium Development Goals.

    b. Themes -- International consensus on a number of priority areas for ICT for Development have been established. The Action Plans of both the UN ICT Task Force and the DOT Force reflect these themes. It is recommended that WSIS also adopt these internationally recognized areas, specifically:

National and Regional E-Strategies: (Action Point 1 in the Genoa Plan of Action) to address the need for a transparent and inclusive process for the early/forward looking development and deployment of national e-Strategies that must include the participation of all stakeholders from government, private sector, civil society, and international organizations. Emphasis should be placed on the realistic prioritization, implementation, sustainability and mobilization of resources in ICT for Development initiatives.

ICT Policy and Governance: (Action Point 5 in the Genoa Plan of Action) Global ICT policy and governance can either be a facilitator or a barrier for full participation in the networked world. This theme should focus on ways to enhance the capacity of developing nation stakeholders to participate in global policymaking related to information and communication technologies (ICT) with a view to building a global ICT policy environment that would be conducive for the achievement of the potential of information technology by all countries.

Human Resource and Capacity Building: (Action Point 3 in the Genoa Plan of Action) to explore the potential of increasing human capacity with the help of ICTs (e-learning) and ICT skills.

Access and Connectivity: (Action Point 2 in the Genoa Plan of Action) to promote connectivity, increase access and work to lower the cost of using Information and Communications Technologies to confront the digital divide in international development. Also promotes the creation and use of local content (Action Point 8 in the Genoa Plan of Action).

Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship: (Action Point 4 in the Genoa Plan of Action) to develop the right policy environment for local enterprise investment and foster entrepreneurial use of ICTs to support socio-economic development.

On a related note, the Okinawa Charter underlines the importance of ICTs for social and economic development, and proposes a strategic framework for bridging the digital divide. A comprehensive collaboration among stakeholders is a central part of the strategy. The UN ICT Task Force is presently "multi-lateralizing" the Charter. WSIS is an

appropriate occasion to take stock of and expand upon this process. It is recommended that a forum be established to examine this and, therefore, build upon the work of the Okinawa Charter.

4. *Leadership in creating an ICT for Development component within the WSIS Plan of Action* -- WSIS represents a critical opportunity to address issues surrounding the Information Society; it will set the policy agenda for years to come. Because of the two-phased structure of the Summit, there will be a chance both to refine this policy agenda *and* to ensure its implementation.

To this end, the efforts of the UN ICT Task Force should ultimately lead to the creation of an ICT for Development component within the WSIS Plan of Action with specific deliverables for Tunis 2005. Numerical targets to be achieved for WSIS Phase II would be announced publicly during Phase I. UN Millennium Development Goals should serve as the basis for a number of these deliverables, in particular, those in the areas of education, gender equality, health and global partnership for development.

The UN ICT Task Force role would not only be in providing leadership towards such input.   It would work to maintain and build upon momentum from Phase I to Phase II. Most importantly, it would work toward assisting, **to the extent of its mandate,** in the attainment of deliverables for Tunis 2005 by engaging in activities such as awareness raising and mobilizing worldwide support for the goal of poverty eradication through the use of ICT.

5. *Overall Intellectual Leadership* -- Provide intellectual leadership with regards to type one and type two outcomes of the WSIS. In particular, highlight the role of "ICT Policy and Governance" and "National & Regional E-Strategies" as critical pieces of the ICT for development equation, while ensuring that **adequate attention is given to Africa**. In doing so, the UN ICT Task Force may offer to organize one or more events incorporating these themes within the framework of the WSIS. This could serve as an opportunity to:

- Present information materials and case studies resulting from, for example, UN ICT Task Force Working Groups, in particular that of WG1 (ICT Policy and Governance) & WG2 (National & Regional E-Strategies). The WG could pick up best practices, provide for exchange of experiences and prepare 2 or 3 issues papers for the WSIS as suggested in the recent New York meeting.

- Presentation of an ICT for Development success story(ies) that will be meaningful to WSIS participants. This could take the form of the recently proposed brochure. Possibilities include the Canadian led IeDRN project, the Italian-led e-Government initiative, or the UNDP-Markle Foundation Global Digital Opportunity Initiative.

Process Issues

In developing a substantive contribution of the UN ICT Task Force to the work of the Summit, it is important that the process of elaboration be as open and transparent as possible, allowing all members to contribute. The main features of this process would be as follows:

• An iterative contribution-driven process in which UN ICT Task Force members make contributions and comment on the contribution framework, at various stages of drafting;

• A timebound process, with specific milestones for the submission of contributions, delivery of drafts and the submission of comments;

• A process providing a coherent and coordinated contribution, thus avoiding the danger of scattering of its efforts and resources;

- A transparent process, in which all contributions, comments and drafts of the framework are published on an open access part of the UN ICT Task Force website. The process should also allow for open meetings to aid discussion. In this respect, the UN ICT Task Force Working Group - WSIS could function in a similar manner to that of Working Groups that presently exist within the Task Force;

- A process that avoids adding further unnecessary complexity to the existing set of internationally adopted goals and targets and avoids creating a parallel process.

November 30, 2002

Dear Chairman Figueres:

On behalf of Working Group I, Internet Governance, I am pleased to provide this response to the Task Force regarding its decision to "make substantive contributions to the preparatory process of the WSIS focusing on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals." (*Summary of Conclusions and Decisions, UN ICT Task Force Third Meeting, September 30, 2002 at the United Nations).* This response explains how the Working Group's objective to improve the participation of developing countries in international ICT governance contributes to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. It also provides concrete drafting suggestions that the Task Force could make to the WSIS preparatory process on that topic.

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Information and communication technology is fostering profound changes worldwide in social, political, legal and economic systems. For developing countries, ICT enhances the potential to reduce poverty, improve education and healthcare, enhance empowerment, and protect environmental resources. While domestic policies are needed to harness ICT for development effectively, international policies forged in multilateral institutions will increasingly define the range of policy options available to developing countries.

Many developing countries have not participated effectively in international ICT governance due to capacity, process, and financial limitations. These limitations may cause developing country stakeholders to question the transparency, legitimacy, and accountability of international governance processes and outcomes related to ICT. It thus has been one objective of the UN-ICT Task Force to strengthen developing countries' voices in international ICT governance.

This objective is deeply rooted in the Millennium Development Goals. The first goal of the MDGs is to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." The UN General Assembly recognized that the achievement of this goal depends in part on "good governance at the international level" and also resolved to "ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies . . . are available to all." (UN Millennium Declaration paras. 13 and 20.5 (A/res/55/2)). Developing country participation in international ICT governance can help to ensure that ICT resources and benefits are more democratically distributed by promoting the development of ICT policies that reflect developing country interests, needs, and experiences.

Working Group I understands that the first meeting of the WSIS in Geneva, 2003 will yield both a Declaration defining the desired characteristics and goals of the Information Society and a Plan of Action for achieving it which will be reviewed at the second meeting of the WSIS in Tunis, 2005. The WSIS Declaration is a vehicle for highlighting the linkage between international ICT governance and the MDGs and establishing improved developing country participation in international ICT governance as a Summit priority. The WSIS Plan of Action is a roadmap for measuring improved developing country participation.

Accordingly, the Task Force contribution to the WSIS preparatory process should seek to focus the WSIS on the realization of the MDGs and to that end seek the inclusion of:

- Principles in the WSIS Declaration to establish that:

  o Information and communication technologies have an important role to play in promoting development and eradicating poverty;

- o The benefits of information and communication technologies, therefore, should be available to all, as recognized in the UN Millennium Declaration;
- o Success in meeting this objective depends, *inter alia*, on developing good governance at the international level for ICT issues;
- o Good governance requires that developing country stakeholders have the capacity and opportunity to participate meaningfully in governance bodies that are addressing ICT issues.

- Specific criteria in the WSIS Plan of Action to measure, for example:

  - o The current level of participation by developing country stakeholders in international ICT policymaking bodies and improvements in their participation;
  - o The efforts by international ICT policymaking bodies to promote awareness of the role that ICT can play in development, to provide information and training about their ICT activities that is targeted to developing countries, and to facilitate the attendance of developing country stakeholders in their meetings;
  - o The programs of UN agencies and other entities to improve developing country participation in international policymaking bodies;
  - o The inclusion in e-strategies of priorities for participating in international ICT policymaking bodies consistent with the national development priorities; and
  - o The development of domestic policymaking processes to develop informed positions for participating in international ICT policymaking bodies.

* * * * *

Pease feel free to contact me with any questions or comments about this contribution.

I look forward to working with you, other members of the Task Force, and the Secretariat in finalizing the Task Force's contribution to WSIS.

Sincerely,

Zoë Baird

United Nations
Information Communications Technology Task Force

Working Group 3: Human Resources Development & Capacity Building
World Summit on the Information Society Input

Overview

The Task Force functions as a facilitating, catalytic and advisory body that serves as a bridge between the ICT and development communities. As such the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a key area for the TF and its Working Groups in that it can play an important role in providing policy guidance on the area of ICT and development for the Summit.

The WSIS offers an excellent platform to achieve political buy-in by Heads of Government and to provide a measurement of where we now stand with regard to highlighting the catalytic role of ICT in meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Indeed, the meetings of the WSIS are important milestones in the delivery of the ICT and Development agenda. While ICT and development is not the only issue for the Summit, it will clearly be one of the most important.

Working Group 3 (WG3), of the UN ICT TF, supports this assertion. As such this document provides WG3 basis for TF input into the WSIS preparations.

Working Group 3: Human Resources Development & Capacity Building

WG3 consists of three subcommittees. These committees include:

- Human Capacity Development;

- Content; and

- Health

Therefore, WG3 contribution to the TF WSIS input is the form of a) general input, and b) specific subcommittee input relating to WSIS.

(a) General Input

❑ WG3 would like to see the Declaration of the Summit as a call to action, a challenge to participants to commit to realising the promise of the Information Society.

❑ The WSIS should focus on achievable, sustainable ways of using information and communications for development (ICD) to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

❑ It should address ways of putting in place a pro-competitive regulatory environment that will build incentives for the private sector to deliver services more effectively to meet this goal and to address the financial, technical and social barriers, especially in developing and least developed countries.

❑ This activity should be undertaken collaboratively between donors, multilateral institutions, governments, the private sector and civil society.

❑ The pro-development dimensions of eInclusion, eGovernance and eLearning should receive particular attention to ensure that measures taken within these themes bring real benefit to developing and least developed countries.

❑ The achievement of WSIS ICT and development related goals should be founded on existing good practice developed through the G8 Digital Opportunities Task Force (DOT Force), the UN ICT Task Force and similar initiatives.

❑ Developing countries should be helped to have a voice in international forums where decisions about the global information society are made.

❑ Local content should be emphasised as an element of all three Summit themes, and of eCommerce likely to benefit those in developing countries.

(B) Human Capacity Development
Human and institutional capacity underlies the entire development process. In particular, it is the basis (together with infrastructure) for the successful use of ICT for human development. As such, gaps in capacity constitute one of the main dimensions of the "digital divide". It is a pre-requisite for the creation of digital content, and for applications of ICT to any thematic areas in development (e.g. education, health, environmental management, etc.).

For these reasons, human and institutional capacity development is viewed by WG3 as a primary theme to be included in the agenda and Plans of Action of the WSIS, in the process of developing and maintaining an inclusive and equitable Information Society. It has various aspects, as follows:

❑ It is often necessary at first to raise awareness of decision-makers and development stakeholders on what ICT, as a facilitator of development, can achieve. Being informed about additional choices to address human development assists stakeholders to devise solutions for existing and future challenges.

❑ Once there is understanding about the possibilities of ICT for human development, people need to acquire the capacity to apply those technologies for practical purposes. This translates into developing the necessary skills and knowledge to realise the potential benefits of those technologies applied to specific personal and local contexts.

❑ One of the reinforcing feedback effects of ICTs is the ability to network people and institutions. Basic ICT capacities, combined with a minimum of infrastructure allow for easier, cheaper and wider means of communication. This in turn leads to increased involvement of individuals in the development process and to enhanced knowledge generation. In fact, networking can lead directly to improved capacity on ICT for human development.

In terms of the Plan of Action from WSIS, the Human Capacity subcommittee recommends support for initiatives that either (a) support human and institutional capacity development on the use of ICT for human development, and/or (b) contribute to increase ICT human resource development, from basic techno-literacy to advanced technical ICT topics.

(B) Content

The valuing, creation and exchange of local content via Information Communications for Development (ICD) is an essential factor in ICT's role in achieving the MDGs. Effective, sustainable ways of achieving this should be determined across all three themes and promoted as a key output of the Summit.

(B) Health

Key comments from WG3 – Health subcommittee are compiled in point form.

❑ It is recommended that the focus of WSIS should be on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Currently, there is concern that the scope of the proposed themes is too broad. Specifically the thematic focus reflect the perspective that information and communication technologies (ICT) are vital in support of development goals but are not an end in themselves.

❑ In the same way that education is understood as fundamental to development, health also plays a crucial role, evident by the fact that three of the eight Millennium Development Goals concern health. Further, health-related investment can spur economic development, as highlighted in the recent report released by the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health[2], which specifically mentions ICT.

In this context, the role of ICT in relation to health must be seen as more than an application, or "e-health" as proposed in the current WSIS approach. ICT in health is clearly part of a more comprehensive health system development, for example in:

- providing reliable, timely and relevant content (including scientific literature, local content, information for health policy and practice, training and education);

- ensuring basic ICT infrastructure for public health;

- enabling education and training for the health workforce in accessing and managing information through ICTs; and

- promoting standards for developing and linking health information systems.

❑ Our vision for the Information Society is for open and unrestricted access to information for health, a global public good. Towards that end, the WSIS provides an opportunity to make real progress in outlining and agreeing on the collaborative action needed to use today's knowledge, tools and technologies in the service of health and development.

❑ WG3 would like to see the Declaration of the Summit as a call to action, a challenge to participants to commit to realising the promise of the Information Society. To use ICTs to truly support the MDGs on health, this means that international and national actors and

the many stakeholders in the economic and social sectors must be able to understand the benefits, their interests and roles in this respect. Worldwide, ICT can make an essential contribution to effective health systems and the efficient and equitable delivery of health services.

❑ WG3 – Health subcommittee, propose that the principle of "equitable access to health information", a global public good, is therefore adopted as a guiding principle in the Declaration. This requires efforts in three areas: Content, infrastructure and education.

We would like to see included in the Action Plan a strengthened and sustained commitment and capacity to:

- finance, build and maintain ICT infrastructure and a pricing structure which reflects the ability of the health system to pay for services;

- ensure services to remote and underserved populations;

- address standards, norms, laws and regulation towards free flow of information for health;

- address the challenge of ensuring ICT in an unstable world – maintaining services where there is internal instability, disaster and other conditions posing an extra threat to health;

- train and educate the health workforce, researchers and policy makers in making the best use of ICTs in health.

❑ The WSIS in Tunis will take place in 2005. This short time between Summit events does not allow enough time to make and measure real progress on any Action Plan that may be adopted. However, we will be judged on whether we are serious about ICTs for development by whether we have made a start in facing up to the global challenges outlined in the Action Plan.

❑ In an earlier communication, WHO (Joint Chair of Health subcommittee) has offered the WSIS secretariat its technical expertise to address ICT and health as part of the WSIS. WG3 would like to reiterate this offer to draw on resources and contributions.

29th November 2002

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[2] Report of the Commission of Marco-economics and Health, Jeffrey Sachs, Geneva December 2001

Click here to view Annex 4

Working Group 6 – Contributions to WSIS Planning

November 27, 2002

The WSIS, scheduled for December 2003, is committed to engaging high-level participants in a meaningful exchange about the ways in which technology (ICT) can accelerate progress in reaching the Millenium Development Goals. In addition, it is an objective of this Summit to engage the participants in such a way that they will be committed to successfully integrating technology into their MDG initiatives. To achieve this goal, the Summit should offer a range of activities that build awareness, create enthusiasm, promote engagement, and result in both commitment and action on the part of the participants.

Working Group 6 (WG6) of the UNICT Task Force is currently supporting three initiatives that are designed to have a dramatic impact on small businesses and entrepreneurs in developing countries. First, *Enablis* will provide investment capital and venture support to medium-sized businesses -- initially in South Africa, and eventually to businesses around the world. Next, *the DevelopmentSpace Network* is poised to intermediate between indigenous, entrepreneurial and social ventures with individual donors where ever they live. And, finally the *Microdevelopment Finance Team* is seeking breakthrough solutions to the problem of achieving scale in the microfinance industry. Innovative deployment of technology is a key component in the strategy behind each of these initiatives.

WG6 believes that the most compelling activities for the WSIS would be a combination of vivid examples and demonstrations that create a sense and vision of what is possible. While it is still too early to target a specific event or set of events for the WSIS, some such opportunities that could be considered include:

Building Awareness

- WG6 Presentation or Panel. Assemble a group from the partnerships that HP has formed for the various WG 6 initiatives and have this team explain the unique nature of each initiative. Focus on what differentiates these activities and what makes the partnerships work.

- Microfinance Presentation. Assuming that the microfinance initiative has advanced to the stage of pilot, it could be very compelling to have the cross-sector teams – microfinance institutions, banking institutions, capital markets, government participants, and technology companies – explain the nature of their pilot and their unique public/private partnerships. If the pilots have not launched, the WSIS could be a great launch event.

Create Enthusiasm and Engagement

- Trade Show. Highlight innovative, grassroots technology projects that are making a distinct difference in their local environments. To further engage the WSIS participants, allow entrepreneurs to present their innovations to the participants in 5-minute videos or personal presentations peppered throughout the regular program.

- Conduct a Development Bazaar. Originally conceptualized at the World Bank, Development Bazaars are a physical marketplace during which a number of social entrepreneurs from around the world actively promote their social projects to a team of judges. At the conclusion of the event, financial grants are awarded directly to the winning projects. This type of event has been so successful in engaging social entrepreneurs and leaders that it is now being copied worldwide. The DevelopmentSpace Network is an electronic (or virtual) extension of this concept. To complement the objectives of the WSIS, a Bazaar could be held that showcases projects which are using ICT as a means of achieving some of the Millenium Development Goals.

- Virtual Events. Using the power of technology, stage an event or series of events that demonstrate the power of technology to connect indigenous entrepreneurs with the participants at the Summit. For example, selected entrepreneurs could be invited to virtually "participate" during parts of the Summit. These individuals could speak to the Summit or could be allowed to question speakers. As another example, DevelopmentSpace is conducting an event for an upcoming conference where they will be connecting villagers to engineers at the conference. The villagers will pose a real-life problem to the engineers who will compete to develop a solution during the course of the conference.

- Create a Social Experience. Allow participants to engage in a unique "experience" that demonstrates the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs and small businesses in their countries. An example from which we could draw ideas was conducted as a fund-raising event by a non-profit dedicated to reducing hunger. When they arrived, dinner guests, who were expecting a sumptuous meal were distributed around the dining room based on the allocation of food in the world. Only a small minority were seated at linen covered tables where they received wine and a multi-course meal. Most were seated on the ground with a handful of rice and a glass of water. The remaining guests sat at park benches where they ate rice and beans, and shared some beer. Not surprisingly, people started stealing, hording and sharing food. Not many left the dinner thinking the same way about food distribution – or hunger. Imagine that type of concept applied to entrepreneurs and the WSIS participants.

Seek Commitment and Action

- Policy Reform. During or before the Summit develop a short list of the most critical criteria for governments to create a more hospitable environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Have as many participants as possible commit to the "Development Bill of Rights."
- Launch National DevelopmentSpace. Announce and launch a DevelopmentSpace portal designed exclusively for one country.

- Launch Microfinance Pilot. Announce the initiation of one of the microfinance pilots or get a new country to announce their involvement in the project.

This list of ideas is simply that – a list of ideas to demonstrate what might be possible, to initiate and encourage dialogue around this subject. We look forward to continuing our work with the UN ICT Task Force and the WSIS team to further flesh out these – and other - ideas to create the type of program that will fully engage the WSIS participants.

Proposal to
2003 World Summit of Information Society
(WSIS)

By
Asia Regional Network of The United Nations ICT Task Force

Subject

Enhancing Information Exchange and Cooperation: Jointly Promote City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region

Background

The development of ICT in the 21st century has affected the way of people's life, study and work greatly, and ICT has become one of the crucial impetuses for the world economic growth. However, the informatization gap among developed, developing and less developed countries and regions has pushed the world in front of the challenge of the digital divide, which is threatening the sustainable development of global economy.

The digital divide appears particularly obvious in the Asia-Pacific region, even among regions of developing countries. It has become a widely concerned issue for governments, private sectors and the academia in the AP region on how to enhance cooperation and exchange effectively, to share resources and experience, to promote the development of traditional industries and city informatization with the application of advanced information technologies. Therefore, the enhancement of informatization exchange and cooperation to push forward city informatization in the Asia-Pacific region is inevitably one of the important topics in the core mandate for UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network.

Objectives

To carry out international activities on city informatization exchange and cooperation with the aim of Bridging the Digital Divide and Promoting IT for Development, to act as an international channel and platform for spreading experience of informatization construction from the developed countries or regions and for providing support and assistance to the developing countries or regions.

Contribution of The UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network To WSIS

According to the requirements from the UN ICT TF to its regional nodes, the Asia Regional Network will perform its task of bridging the digital divide from three different

fields of governments, private sectors and the academia, and international organizations, which are respectively taken charge of by China, India and ESCAP. The Asia Regional Network of the UN ICT TF will devote itself to WSIS as a working platform for the follow-up activities of the results of WSIS.

Our suggestions to WSIS:
- Set up a theme on how to spread and advance e-Governance in developing countries and regions;
- Discuss issues of how to utilize the preliminarily established UN ICT TF regional nodes and its programs and activities to further enlarge the WSIS results and implement the follow-ups;
- Make an initiative of UN ICT TF regional networks to carry out assessment on regional city informatization development and submit the assessment report.

Activities to be carried out by UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network

As stated in its project document, UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network and its secretariat will make full efforts to build up an international cooperation and exchange platform in Asia with the aim of promoting IT for development, especially for the development of those less developed countries, cities and regions in Asia. It plans to develop activities regularly in the future 3-5 years, which will include:

1) Development Plan for Regional Network

In response to the call of UN ICT TF, the Asia Regional Network was formerly established in June 2002. It is expected to gradually develop and enlarge the network through 3-5 years' efforts.
- The UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network Committee: the committee is co-chaired by China, India and ESCAP on the basis of network members (currently more than twenty) and will widely invite representatives from all Asia governments to be its members;
- The UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network Advisory Group: the advisory group will be formed by representatives of outstanding companies and leaders of the academia in Asian countries.

2) International Forum

Since 2003, a large international forum will be convened once a year in China with the aim of "Promoting Communication and Sharing of Informatization Achievements among Cities to Bridge the Digital Divide". The participants are senior governmental officials, Mayors, leaders from private sectors and the academia. Its objective is to become a platform for IT cooperation and exchange in the whole world under the efforts of all the sponsors and participants.

3) Training on Informatization

Since 2003, 4 workshops on Informatization for Development in China will be held once a year for IT officials of governments and IT managers of corporations from less developed cities and regions in Asia. The training will mainly focus on city informatization level, best solutions on city informatization and the latest ICT applications, etc.

4) Assessment System and Policy Seminar

A set of Assessment System on City Informatization in the Asia Pacific Region will be established and improved since 2003. In the period of annual international forum, training activities and program investigation, relative surveys and assessment on city informatization will be conducted on over 10 typical cities, and then a series of expert and entrepreneur seminars will be held to complete the Analysis Report on Assessment System on City Informatization in the Asia Pacific Region.

5) Cooperation and Exchange of Corporations

In the period of annual international forum and training activities, a series of conferences and exhibitions, visits, discussions and promotion activities for good products will be held on the subject of ICT-for-Development.

6) UNICT-Asia Website

The website www.UNICT-Asia.org, which was formally opened in June 2002, will be upgraded. It is expected to regularly release information on the latest trends and best solutions on informatization in the Asia-Pacific region and to be linked with related international websites to share information resources. Its objective is to gradually become an information platform for informatization in Asia and the regional network platform for WSIS and UN ICT TF.

Support to be obtained from UN

Chairperson of the UN ICT TF will act as the Honorary Chair of the international forum;

Members from the UN ICT TF and its advisory group will actively participate in the forum;

The UN ICT TF Secretariat will give its support and guidance on the relevant training, discussion, cooperation and exchange activities and others;

Other UN ICT TF regional networks will give their supports to and actively participate in the relevant activities.

About the UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network Secretariat

The Preparatory Meeting of the Asia Regional Network of the UN ICT Task Force was convened in Shanghai in March 2002, which attracted 11 countries and regions such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore, aimed at establishing the Asia Regional Network. In this meeting, it identified the modality that the regional

network would be jointly hosted by China, India and ESCAP. It is also agreed that Shanghai is the site of its secretariat.

The Inauguration of the UN ICT Task Force Asia Regional Network was convened in June 2002 in Shanghai, which attracted 23 countries and regions such as Singapore, Japan, Mongolia and Malaysia. The information platform of the UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network www.unict-asia.org was formally open.

Statement

This proposal, which is jointly drawn up by three organizers of the UN ICT TF Asia Regional Network as China, India and ESCAP, is finalized and submitted to the UN ICT TF Secretariat by Asia Regional Network Secretariat. It shall be a part of the whole proposal of the UN ICT TF to WSIS.

Recommendation

The United Nations ICT Task Force may consider adopting the proposal for discussion and provide support for the activities included.

Asia Regional Network Secretariat

VIII.   **United Nations ICT Task Force**

26 November 2002

Dear Mr. Figueres-Olsen,

I was pleased to receive your letter of 21 October 2002 sharing with us the result from the brainstorming on the preparatory process for the WSIS. We have distributed your paper to the participants of the Geneva Node of the UN ICT Task Force for information and comments. Now I am pleased to pass on to you some comments and proposals for the WSIS process as well as informing you on progress in our region.

1. Regional progress

The Pan European Regional Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest 7-9 November was the regional event in the WSIS process leading to the Summit in Geneva 2003. The UNECE had closely cooperated with the Romanian Authorities in order to prepare the conference and the UNECE ICT Task Force Geneva Node had made a major contribution to the conceptual outcome of the conference through the provision of a first draft of a set of "Principles" for the Information Society. These Principles laid the basis for an intergovernmental process led by the Romanian Authorities, that produced a substantive political declaration on Principles and Priorities for the Information Society. This declaration was adopted by the conference and will provide major regional input into the WSIS process. The declaration is enclosed for your information.

In addition, the UNECE had organized three events that were important parts of the Bucharest conference. First, a parallel event on "Building a Gender Sensitive Information Society" was organized, second, the UNECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development had developed a thematic workshop on "E-policy and E-Regulations", and thirdly, the UNECE contributed (in cooperation with ISO, IEC and ITU) with a section in the workshop on "Defining the Information Society". All the three events were well attended and appreciated.

The conference played an important part in the WSIS process and its structure; its outcome will be examined in the upcoming regional conferences in Tokyo and Santo Domingo to take place in January 2003.

Mr. José-Maria Figueres-Olsen
Chair, UN ICT Task Force
World Economic Forum
91-93 Route de Capite
CH-1223 Cologny

The follow-up to the Bucharest Conference marks an important step in the WSIS process. Three major actions are being considered at this stage. First, the Geneva Node should actively participate at the PrepCom-2 of the WSIS in February 2003. It should in particular support the discussion which, based on the declaration adopted at the Regional Conferences and other inputs, will eventually lead to the final Summit declaration. Second, the WSIS process envisages concrete action plans to be developed and discussed. The Geneva Node envisages taking part in developing both plans for the region as well as recommendations for general actions. Thirdly, during the conference, a number of events leading up to the summit were planned and these events should, wherever possible, be coordinated so that their individual focus contributes to the overall objectives of the Summit.

2. Development of action plans for the WSIS summit

The Summit foresees the adoption of a political declaration and concrete action plans. The Geneva Node has also initiated work on action plans through the development of an Integrated Framework Matrix based on the principles earlier developed in its conceptual document (see Annex I). It is now logical that the underlying principles for the action plans should be further developed so that concrete strategies can be worked out. These plans could be based on the specific requirements in the region and support the economies in transition in their integration efforts.

3. Coordination of events

A large numbers of events related to the ICT and WSIS process are planned during the year leading to the Summit. It would be logical to encourage the organizers to focus their events in such way so that they feed into the final Summit and supports its objectives. Further, these events would be much more effective should they be recognized by the ICT Task Force and promoted through our Websites and through our network of list servers.

4. Preparation for the PrepCom-2 in February 2003

The WSIS and the ICT Task Force received excellent visibility through the regional meeting in Bucharest. It would be advantageous to keep this momentum and to actively participate in the PrepCom-2. In this meeting actions should be focused along three lines:

1. support and further develop the conceptual work already achieved through he political declaration in Bucharest and other regional preparatory conferences;
2. Seek support for the development of action plans and the promotion of the "Action Framework" developed by the Geneva Node
3. Actively plan and coordinate side events for the Summit.

5. Planning and preparations for WSIS Summit side events

A series of events are planned during the period leading to the Summit. In particular, the UNECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development (TSIED) is planning to organize several events and conferences during 2003 on E-policy and E-regulations and a side event during the Summit itself.

The UNECE is also currently discussing two major side events to the Summit. One event is planned with CERN that would comprise a large number of scientists, which would discuss the opportunities resulting from the technical development work taking place in CERN. This includes the development of the new "GRID" technology. Further the UNECE has started a discussion with the ISO for a joint ISO/IEC/ITU and UNECE event dealing with standards and electronic business.

The UNECE will also cooperate with the "ITU Working Group on Gender and ICT" and UNIFEM in organizing a side event on gender issues at the WSIS Summit.

I will keep you informed about future developments as they evolve. I hope that you share my satisfaction with the progress made in the Region and trust that our joint efforts can substantively contribute under your leadership to the overall progress of the WSIS process.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(signed)
Paolo Garonna
Deputy Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Dear Mr. Figueres,

On behalf of Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, who is currently away from New York, I wish to thank you for your e-mail message of 21 October, and for the attached note.

As the Millennium Development Goals serve as a guide for all UN action, we applaud the Task Force's decision to ensure that the Summit focuses on ICT for MDGs. The application of ICTs is the means to achieve our goal, namely, the integration of developing countries in the global knowledge-based economy. This goal, we believe, should be at the centre of the Summit's Political Declaration and Programme of Action.

From the perspective of public information, it is important that we consider how to use information and the media for achieving this goal. Allow me to suggest some points that should find their way into the Summit's final documents.

ICT for development

The media—traditional ones such as radio, as well as the new ICT-based media—should be mobilized for transmitting ICT messages in rural and marginal areas of developing countries, conveying information and knowledge useful for development. The rapid expansion of community-based radio, satellite broadcasts and the Internet taking place in many developing countries, should be used to train and educate disadvantaged developing country audiences on farming, fisheries, livestock raising, access to credit and entrepreneurship. The media could play an equally crucial role in spreading messages on health, education and environmental protection.

Because of their approach, development economists sometimes overlook the information component. But media and communication experts should be called upon to design information strategies and programmes benefiting developing country audiences.

The Summit's final documents should stress the need to integrate media strategies into overall development strategies.

A related point concerns the liberalization of media taking place in many developing countries, which is leading to an explosion in local radio and TV stations, with an expansion of creativity and openness and the emergence of a host of voices. Care should be taken to strengthen the positive aspects of this explosion, to ensure that it leads not only to a growth of entertainment, but also of education and knowledge.

Media convergence

Equally vital for the information society is the convergence of traditional and new media, especially the Internet. The "traditional" media—television and radio in particular—are often effective alternatives for development among the very poor and the illiterate. In this regard, ICT for development does not automatically mean Internet. In Africa, for instance, radio is still by far the most dominant medium, with ownership of radio sets far higher than any other electronic device. United Nations Member States regularly stress this media convergence at the General Assembly and its subsidiary body, the Committee on Information, regularly requesting the Department of Public Information to continue to give priority both to the Internet and to traditional media in its

work. Therefore, the World Summit should consider furthering the development of traditional media and its links with the new technologies.

North-South unbalances

The North-South unbalances in technological capacity and content must be addressed. The "digital divide" is also a divide in optical fibres and high-speed connections: there are more Internet connections in Manhattan than in the whole of Africa. And the "content divide" is made even wider by the new technologies: for instance, 85 per cent of the world's web sites are in English. All components of the information society, both in the North and in the South, should have the means, resources and infrastructure to create and spread original content in harmony with their cultural identity and utilizing their own language. So far, the information revolution has been one with lots of liberté, some fraternité, and no égalité.

At the same time, the final documents should explicitly refer to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression and opinion. Article 19 enshrines our faith in the freedom of the press, and every year, on 3 May, the United Nations observes World Press Freedom Day. By definition, the independent media have the duty to say and print what they deem fit, without interference of any kind. The two concepts—diversity of content and press freedom—can and need to go together.

From the perspective of human rights, calls for considering universal access to ICT and to information as a human right are on the increase. These calls should be heeded.

Gender issues

The final documents should stress the need to build a gender-sensitive information society. The landmark Beijing Platform of Action, adopted at the 1995 Fourth World conference on UN women, calls for the empowerment of women through their access to and use of information technologies. The digital divide not only separates the North and the South axis, but runs along a man-woman axis as well. A gender-sensitive information society should promote "digital inclusiveness", striving to make all women and girls ICT-literate. The information society will be truly inclusive only if women fully participate in it. Next March, the Commission on the Status of Women will discuss as a priority theme women's participation and access to the media, and information and communication technologies as an instrument for women's advancement and empowerment. The Commission's deliberations will serve as an input to the World Summit.

Africa

Bridging the digital divide in Africa is essential. ICTs are a powerful tool for economic growth and poverty eradication, and could facilitate the integration of African countries into the global market. African leaders have made the development of ICT one of the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), thus showing their commitment to seize the opportunities of the digital revolution. The NEPAD strategy includes a specific section on bridging the digital divide (paragraphs 104 to 108).

UN initiatives

The final documents should refer to relevant United Nations initiatives, such as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, observed in 2001, the 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic Media.

Overall, the final documents should articulate a vision of the global information society we want to achieve. They should be universal and empowering; they should bring the world together instead of adding new divisions; and they should create a more just and more harmonious environment for the peaceful development of all peoples. The global information society must be a society that tears down the present barriers to understanding and tolerance; a society where opportunities for the disadvantaged and marginalized would be fostered; a society where information would nurture sharing and mutual comprehension.

The information society should contribute to what the UN Secretary-General has termed "inclusive globalization". Addressing Yale University on 2 October, Mr. Annan recalled that the revealing translation in Arabic of the word "globalization" is "global integration". He called for "an inclusive globalization whose purpose lies not only in opening markets, but in expanding opportunity and promoting cooperation", since "the globalization of economies and societies is supported and sustained by a 'globalization of community'."

For their part, the organizations of the United Nations family, starting with the Department of Public Information, could support these efforts by carrying out information campaigns and educational programmes.

The Department of Public Information is making progress in its plans to organize a World Electronic Media Forum in Geneva in December 2003 on the role of electronic media in the information society, as a side event to the Summit. The two-day Forum (which might open on 9 December, one day ahead of the Summit) will bring together television executives from developed and developing countries, as well as policy-makers and representatives of the United Nations system. A project proposal is being elaborated with various national television organizations. We hope to enlist the participation of media personalities, such as Ted Turner. We were very pleased that the Forum was mentioned in the Secretary-General's message on World Television Day, 21 November 2002, a copy of which is attached.

The Department of Public Information is ready to support the initiatives of the Task Force and its partners to make the Summit a success.

Yours sincerely,

Thérèse Gastaut
Officer-in-Charge
Department of Public Information

UNITED STATES COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

AND THE

WORLD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES ALLIANCE

BUILDING AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

A ROADMAP FOR THE
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

(October 2002)

INTRODUCTION:

The United States Council for International Business (USCIB) and the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) are participating in the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI), a coalition of business organizations providing input into the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The WSIS will consist of two meetings – in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunisia in 2005. The UN General Assembly resolution calling for the organization of the WSIS states that it should address the whole range of relevant issues related to the information society. The UN General Assembly has also recommended that the WSIS adopt a Declaration of Principles on the fundamentals of the Information Society in the 21st Century and a Plan of Action for concerted development of the information society. Initial preparatory documents support a broad agenda for the WSIS.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE:

The potential for a WSIS agenda of virtually unlimited scope raises concern within business, particularly in view of our experience with the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which took place in August 2002. From the outset, the effectiveness of the WSSD preparatory process was compromised by the unwillingness or inability of several stakeholders to set priorities among a wide range of development-related issues. The lesson from the WSSD is that if a summit is about everything, it is ultimately about little.

USCIB AND WITSA RECOMMENDATIONS:

USCIB and WITSA believe strongly that governments, in preparation for WSIS, should identify and focus on a set of priority issues that highlight the fundamental building blocks of an information society. Focusing on these priority issues will create a

meaningful framework for demonstrable progress toward the long-term sustainability of a truly global information society.

USCIB and WITSA believe that the WSIS should focus on three priorities:
- The role of government in introducing competition and providing a favorable regulatory environment to enable the development and deployment of an underlying Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure
- Education, both basic and in the use of information technology products and applications
- Benefits of applications to improve the lives of citizens, specifically e-government, e-health and e-learning

DISCUSSION:

Infrastructure: An underlying secure ICT infrastructure is essential to benefiting from the information society. Without such an infrastructure, including access devices, it will be impossible to connect to the Internet from which many of the benefits of the information society come. Thus, the WSIS should focus first on the role of governments in introducing competition and providing a favorable regulatory environment to create the framework necessary to ensure such deployment/development by the private sector.

Education: Education is necessary in order to obtain sustainable benefit from the information society. Without the requisite education, including basic tools such as literacy and more targeted tools such as computer literacy, the citizenry will not be able to utilize the deployed infrastructure and equipment necessary to access the Internet. Thus, the WSIS should focus on a framework that will develop the requisite skills through appropriate public-private partnerships to engage in an information society.

Benefits of Applications: Applications[3] are the tools that allow citizens to derive the benefit from the information infrastructure. ICT applications can play an important role in advancing general economic development and living standards. For example, the UNICT Task Force is currently supporting an approach that emphasizes the importance of ICT in development. In fact, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, has stated his intentions to exploit ICTs to meet the Millenium Development Goals. In this regard, we recognize three primary uses of ICT:

- *e-Learning:* closely linked to the education section above, this recognizes the potential for ICT to advance/enhance education.

- *e-Health:* ICT can greatly enhance health care delivery systems by connecting health care professionals around the world, including online networks of expertise, and access to information about health issues confronting countries.

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[3] Applications should be construed broadly to include the entire array of benefits that ICT can offer in the more efficient and inclusive delivery of health care, education and government services.

- *e-Government:* WSIS could also serve as an important forum to address e-Government. Such a focus could ensure that governments better serve their constituencies. Moreover, e-Government initiatives will enhance participation in the information society.

The private sector is the primary investor in and innovator of infrastructure, products and services. Effective markets are therefore essential to ensuring a sustainable information society. The priorities set forth above support the creation of markets by fostering a connected, educated and healthy population that can increasingly become engaged in the information society. Such engagement begins through the use of ICT for development and then builds upon itself as development proceeds. USCIB and WITSA believe that public/private partnerships can often play an important role in facilitating these applications.

CONCLUSION:

Infrastructure development/deployment, education, and applications, e-Learning, e-Health and e-Government create a reinforcing framework to develop the sustainability of an information society:

- Without an educated population any deployed infrastructure will be a lost investment;
- An educated population without the infrastructure will not be able to engage in the information society; and
- Without applications so that citizens can experience the benefits of the information society and the resulting societal benefits, there will not be sufficient demand to sustain an information society for the long-term.

29th November 2002

DFID Contribution to the UN ICT Task Force WSIS
<u>**DECLARATION**</u>

Task Force wide

- The World Summit should focus on achievable, sustainable ways of using information and communications for development (ICD) to achieve the MGDs.

- It should address ways of putting in place a pro-competitive regulatory environment that will build incentives for the private sector to deliver services more effectively to meet this goal and to address the financial, technical and social barriers, especially in developing and least developed countries.

- This activity should be undertaken collaboratively between donors, multilateral institutions, governments, the private sector and civil society.

- The pro-poor dimensions of e inclusion, e governance and e learning should receive particular attention to ensure that measures taken within these themes bring real benefit to poor people.

- The achievement of World Summit goals should be founded on existing good practice developed through the G8 DOT Force, the UN ICT Task Force and similar initiatives.

- Developing countries should be helped to have a voice in international forums where decisions about the global information society are made.

- Local content should be emphasised as an element of all three Summit themes, and of e commerce likely to benefit poor people.

UNCTAD'S comments regarding the UN ICT Task Force involvement
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Like several other agencies and organizations represented in the Task Force, UNCTAD is directly involved in the preparations for the World Summit, and in this regard, it has already submitted a number of specific substantive proposals at meetings of the HLSOC focal points. In line with UNCTAD's mandate and field of expertise, these propositions concern mainly the practical applications of ICT to economic activity and the strategies that developing countries can adopt to facilitate the integration of their enterprises in the emerging global digital economy.

1. ICT Development and Capacity Building in a Digital Society

The current inter-sessional work programme of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD) focuses on the theme "Technology development and capacity building in a digital society". In carrying out this work programme, the UNCTAD Secretariat is working to review existing technology indicators and evaluate countries' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capabilities and the digital divide in order to assess and benchmark countries' levels of technological development in ICTs, analyse changes in these capabilities over time and review key policy factors with significant impact on ICT outcomes. This work benchmarks, contrasts and compares countries' technological development in ICTs. Taken together, it is envisaged that these UNCTAD's work will provide measures of ICT development and formulate policies to address national ICT capabilities and the international digital divide in the context of globalisation. The work also could be used as important input to the World Summit on the Information Society.

To this end, UNCTAD has proposed to contribute three substantive papers for consideration by the preparatory process of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Paper I reviews existing technology-related indicators and indices (UNDP, UNIDO, World Economic Forum, etc…), as well as existing ICT/Internet indicators (OECD, ITU) and indices from academia and the private sector (Mosaic Group, McConnell International, Economic Intelligence Unit, Harvard University). It subsequently identifies the most relevant indicators of technology (and ICT) for development.

Paper II presents a theoretical framework and develops indices for technological development, including indicators for R&D, human capital and export performance, benchmark countries as 'catching up', keeping up' and 'getting ahead', analyses results to reveal some interesting trends, and attempts to draw conclusions from trends identified. The paper presents a cross-country analysis of technological development for some 90 countries.

Paper III presents a theoretical framework and develops indices for ICT diffusion, including indicators for connectivity, access, usage and policy. It classifies countries in terms of ICT diffusion; and makes some analysis for policy recommendations. The paper presents a cross-country analysis of ICT diffusion for 200 countries and territories.

It is envisaged that these papers will identify effective ICT initiatives and outcomes and promote greater inclusion of LDCs in the world economy through ICT capacity building.

2. The Digital Economy and Economic Development

UNCTAD has also suggested to organize a session of the summit, or alternatively a parallel event, that would examine the question of how the widespread adoption of e-business practices can contribute to increasing the opportunities for sustainable development, and how governments, the agencies of the UN system and partners in the private sector and the NGOs can contribute to the realization of those opportunities.

UNCTAD's proposal aims at maximizing the output of the contribution it and other agencies participating in the summit are making to a number of converging international initiatives in this field, notably the work of the G-8's DOT force and of the UN ICT Task Force. At the same time, it addresses issues in which UNCTAD has the ability to make a substantive contribution.

The importance of e-business for economic growth and development

E-business for development is proposed as a theme because the adoption of e-business practices, by raising productivity levels and thus enlarging the resources base of developing countries, will be the main way in which information technologies can make a direct contribution to faster economic growth. The Internet also gives SMEs (which are the vast majority in developing countries) the possibility to access international markets that used to be closed to them because of high transaction costs.

Developing countries can also profit from the chance that e-commerce gives them to exploit competitive advantages that were not useable in the "old economy". Labour-intensive services can now be delivered on line, giving an opportunity to developing countries with relatively skilled workers and low salaries. The emergence of successful industries such as software development or teleservicing in several developing countries is an example of this. Thanks to e-commerce, entrepreneurs in developing countries can also access cheaper, better-quality trade-related services (for instance business information) thus escaping local de facto monopolies.

By helping to improve the transparency of the operation of markets and public institutions e-business practices reduce the cost of complying with trade-related regulations and also the burden of corruption that often affects more severely the SMEs and the weaker players in the economy. Adopting e-business can make developing economies more competitive, more attractive for FDI and more likely to benefit from integration in the global economy.

Most of the benefits sketched above are for the time being just a potential waiting to become a reality. Furthermore, some fear that the slower adoption of Internet-based business practices in developing countries can turn the "digital economy" into a cause for increased marginalization of developing countries, rather than the engine of growth it is often expected to become. As a major factor of globalization, the effects of global information networks on the economy are also perceived in some quarters as a threat to the local productive sector and/or local trade.

In order to address such concerns and to ensure that the emerging global digital economy does indeed include developing countries, it is important to mainstream e-business issues into global, regional and national development strategies. This process is still at a very early stage and most countries still need to put in place national e-commerce strategies and action plans to create an enabling environment for e-commerce.

Policy dialogue and UNCTAD's involvement in the WSIS

As a contribution to that process, UNCTAD has launched an intergovernmental policy dialogue that should lead to the emergence of a consensus on the key actions at the global, regional and national levels that governments should undertake in the area of electronic commerce and connected business applications of the Internet. In 2002 this process has involved high-level regional meetings (Central America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific region) as well an intergovernmental Expert Meeting in Geneva. Further regional meetings are planned for Africa and Latin America in 2002, and a second expert meeting will be held in Geneva late in 2003. The focus of all these activities has been

the creation of awareness and political will to put in motion changes that will lead to the removal of obstacles to the development of e-commerce, as an essential component of national e-strategies.

Bottlenecks in infrastructure and human resources are far from being the only factors restricting the involvement of enterprises of many developing in electronic commerce. While these problems are real and serious, the range of issues that need to be addressed is much wider than that.

There is a need to design and implement action plans to tackle cross-sectoral aspects of the adoption of e-commerce in developing countries, such as for instance the regulatory and legal framework of e-commerce, the fiscal implications of e-commerce, e-government or the use of the Internet in enterprise development, and very especially female entrepreneurship.

In specific sectors of interest for developing countries e-commerce can generate new opportunities for economic diversification (UNCTAD has already identified interesting examples of this even in the LDCs). It can also enable them to capture a greater share of value generated by some activities (for instance, tourism), or help them overcome traditional hurdles for the competitiveness of their exports (for instance e-logistics). Finally, there are aspects linked to the application of the Internet to government services that are fundamental for the competitiveness of enterprises, such as customs. This is an area in which UNCTAD has a long experience of applying ICT in developing countries to improve the efficiency of enterprise operation and the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies.

The above is a non-exhaustive list of e-commerce issues on which the Summit itself and the process leading to it could help generate political support for action plans at the global, regional and national levels. UNCTAD carries out a work programme that includes the collection of data and information on the reality of e-commerce in developing countries, and research and analysis activities in support of intergovernmental work concerning the topics mentioned above. The annual *E-commerce and Development Reports*[4] are among the main practical results of this work. overnmental policy dialogue takes place in the form of expert meetings in Geneva and regional workshops and conferences that will span the next two/three years. As the process of policy dialogue (both among governments and among these and non-governmental players) moves forward in UNCTAD there is a good opportunity to feed into the Summit the experiences, ideas and consensus generated. This would provide the basis for the proposed e-business focused session (or parallel event) at the summit.

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[4] The Reports are freely available at http://r0.unctad.org/ecommerce/