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OCCAM - OBSERVATORY FOR CULTURAL AND AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION

In view of the forthcoming PrepCom2 and of the World Summit on the Information Society, the Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM) would like to highlight some items that should be discussed in PrepCom2 and included in the Draft WSIS Action Plan and Declaration.

Since its foundation, OCCAM has devoted significant attention to the needs of disadvantaged and isolated villages and has supported projects which were directed to tackle the problems of those communities. The significant "Solar villages" pilot projects in Honduras have proved to be very effective in tackling those issues and OCCAM, in accordance also to the non-paper "Information and Communication for all" by the Adama Samassékou, President of WSIS Preparatory Committee, endorses the creation of a benchmark for action to be taken which should include: all villages of the planet to be equipped with a telecenter by 2010; all villages to be connected by 2010, with a community access points by 2015.

In its constant research on the issues related to the digital divide and on the basis of the results of the I and II Infopoverty World Conferences - held in 2001 and 2002 in Milan, with the Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic and the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers and under the aegis of UNIC Rome, UNESCO, IFAD and the European Parliament - OCCAM has come to the conclusion that the responsibility of the gap lies also in the lack of adequate products particularly fit for the needs of disadvantaged communities, which usually have no telephone or cable lines and no electricity lines.

One of the best instruments to bridge the product gap is what the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, launched as Global Compact: "We have to choose between a global market driven only by calculations of short-term profit, and one which has a human face. Between a world which condemns a quarter of the human race to starvation and squalor, and one which offers everyone at least a chance of prosperity, in a healthy environment. Between a selfish free-for-all in which we ignore the fate of the losers, and a future in which the strong and the successful accept their responsibilities, showing global vision and leadership". A specific Global Compact on the issues related to the digital divide will constitute an important step forward in the definition of an effective strategy to bridge the digital divide.

Recolling the proposal - made by OCCAM President, Arch. Pierpaolo Saporito, in the Plenary Session of PrepCom1 on July 3rd 2002 - for considering the III Infopoverty World Conference, to be held on June 12th and 13th 2003 in Washington DC (USA) and on June 13th 2003 in Milan (European Session broadcast live to Washington), a preparatory meeting for the WSIS, OCCAM suggests that, being the theme of ICT Role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals the main subject of this year's edition of the Infopoverty World Conference, the delegates of PrepCom2 give mandate to the III Infopoverty World Conference to address in particular, among the themes of discussion in the WSIS, that of the digital villages, as exempla of successful integration of different technologies, such as wireless Internet, solar energy, user-friendly software and hardware, able to contribute greatly to the improvement of the standard of living of isolated and disadvantaged communities.