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International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The Secretary-General of ITU is pleased to submit to the second preparatory committee meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society the contribution of ITU. This contribution consists of:

- 1) The ITU input to the WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action;
- 2) An information document for the Summit on ITU activities.

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ITU Secretary-General

Annexes:

- Annex 1: ITU input to WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action;
- Annex 2: Information document for World Summit on the Information Society on the activities of ITU.

Annex 1

ITU input to WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action

(Based on Annex 1 to Decision PLEN/1 of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Marrakesh, 2002))

Introduction

1 ITU has a pivotal role in providing a global perspective in regard to the information society. With its wealth of expertise and experience in the development of telecommunications and its experience in addressing the needs of developing countries, ITU is an active and relevant contributor to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and uses this unique opportunity to contribute to building the global information society in all areas of its core competencies.

2 This contribution is made within the context of the WSIS preparatory process that has already been initiated, and takes into account the outcome of PrepCom-1 on content and themes.

Framework

3 In this spirit, a framework is proposed that reflects the core competencies of ITU and provides ITU's input to the WSIS declaration of principles and plan of action.

4 This input will require further development of the concepts, implementation and deliverables associated with specific proposals that will be part of ITU's input with a view to offering the WSIS process a meaningful, practical and action-oriented contribution.

5 To this end, the following three broad objectives have been identified to structure the ITU input to the WSIS declaration of principles and plan of action:

- i) Providing access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) for all;
- ii) ICTs as a tool for economic and social development - and meeting the Millennium Development Goals;
- iii) Confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

6 These objectives were selected having regard to the core competencies of ITU and represent areas where ITU could play an important role in efforts aimed at overcoming the digital divide and creating digital opportunities, especially for developing countries, by building upon existing efforts and activities. These objectives may be modified or extended, as appropriate, to structure the ITU input to any further declaration or plan of action to be elaborated in the WSIS process.

7 In developing ITU contributions to WSIS, the following criteria are used as a guide in the consideration, identification and elaboration of each proposal:

- a) track the core competencies of the Union;
- b) be demand-driven;
- c) be global in scope with enough flexibility to respond to national and regional conditions;
- d) be particularly responsive to the needs of developing countries;
- e) take fully into account, and where possible build upon, the activities carried out in other relevant international and regional forums so as to avoid duplication and create added value;
- f) be practical, setting realistic and measurable objectives and identifying tangible results;

- g) identify with national governments the potential for partnerships, as appropriate, and explore these opportunities with potential partners.

Contribution to the declaration of principles

8 The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Marrakesh, 2002) concluded that WSIS can contribute to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals as reflected in the UN Millennium Declaration. The principles identified below are relevant to ITU competencies, including areas of shared competencies with other organizations.

9 The information society offers great potential in promoting sustainable development. To that end, guiding principles could include, but not be limited to:

- a) securing the right to information and knowledge;
- b) promoting universal access at affordable cost;
- c) strengthening international cooperation;
- d) establishing an enabling environment;
- e) developing human capacity;
- f) promoting linguistic diversity and cultural identity;
- g) strengthening information and communication network security;
- h) improving market access, especially for products and services from developing countries;
- i) addressing global challenges.

Furthermore, each country's special needs should be respected and a "users' needs" approach should be followed.

10 In order to ensure that information and communication technologies are widely available, and that all the world's inhabitants share the benefits they bring, the foundations of an information society could be supportive of, but not limited to, the following as fundamental objectives:

I Providing access to ICTs for all

11 Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate in the global information society and no one should be excluded from the benefits it offers. Access to ICT infrastructure and services should constitute one of the primary objectives of the Summit.

12 The provision of universal and affordable access to ICTs and the development of ICT applications and services, especially in underserved urban, rural and remote areas, remains one of the biggest challenges for bridging the digital divide.

13 Connectivity is therefore not only critical, but also central as an enabling agent in building a global information society in which all citizens can participate on an equal footing. Of particular importance is the imperative need to address the special needs of developing countries, countries with economies in transition, small island developing states and least developed countries.

14 In order to attain fully the objectives of universal and affordable access to ICTs, there is a need for the development of enabling and transparent legal, policy and regulatory frameworks.

II ICTs as a tool for economic and social development - and meeting the Millennium Development Goals

15 ICTs are central to the creation of the global knowledge economy and can therefore play an important role in promoting sustainable development and eradicating poverty.

16 The potential of ICTs to empower people is enormous. This is particularly the case for women, youth, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities. ICTs can help to build capacities and skills, create more employment opportunities, assist small and medium-sized enterprises, and

increase participation and informed decision-making at all levels, notably through enhanced education and training, especially when accompanied by full respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

17 Technological innovation can contribute substantially to providing better access to health services, education, information and knowledge, as well as offering a wider variety of means by which people can communicate, thus contributing to promoting greater understanding and improving the quality of life of the world's citizens.

III Confidence and security in the use of ICTs

18 The benefits of ICTs can only be fully harnessed if there is confidence that these technologies and networks are reliable and secure, and are not misused. The development of a compatible, stable and globally recognized framework of standards constitutes an essential element for constructing the information society, and would constitute an important confidence-building measure.

19 This confidence is also based on the existence of policy, regulatory and legal frameworks that, notably, address issues such as cybercrime, information and communication network security, protection of privacy, legal aspects of electronic commerce and protection of intellectual property rights. These issues should be tackled on an international basis with the active participation of all stakeholders.

20 The presence of computer pirates and viruses requires the development of effective information and communication network security systems. For this, international cooperation by governments, the private sector and civil society is required so as to enable actions to be coordinated and legal provisions to be established that protect and provide security for the infrastructure, systems and services being developed in the framework of the global information society.

Contribution to the plan of action of WSIS

21 The following identifies areas of action relevant to ITU competencies, including areas of shared competencies with other organizations.

I Providing access to ICTs for all

A Infrastructure development and affordable access to ICT services

22 In the development of telecommunication infrastructure, which includes access, trunk and long-distance networks, priority and emphasis must be given to rural networks and those serving remote and isolated areas. In this respect, ICTs (for example wireless communications, including radio and satellite services) could offer opportune and economical solutions.

23 The development and integration of the Internet is another key element which, in conjunction with telecommunications, forms the dual basis for the integration and development of the infrastructure for the information society.

24 In order to facilitate broader access to ICTs for all, a key requirement is the availability of content that is relevant and of interest to users, and is in a language that they can understand. Initiatives in the development of such content have to be largely taken at national level, but for the developing and least developed countries a programme of assistance with technical and financial inputs from appropriate forums in the United Nations system should be considered.

25 Affordable and accessible terminal equipment for end-users is an essential part of the infrastructure of the information society and is essential to overcoming the digital divide. Widespread adoption of international standards (including ITU Recommendations) would favour broader deployment of ICT infrastructure.

26 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) A global programme with the objective of providing sustainable connectivity to every village, within the context of national development policies and programmes, under the guidance of the competent national authorities and, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, using the most appropriate and affordable technologies.
- b) Global, regional and national actions and mechanisms to enable the provision of a wider range of ICT services, with higher performance and at affordable costs.
- c) Concrete actions required for the establishment of national network access points (NAPs), linked to the global Internet.
- d) Higher priority for resource allocation to be considered by all agencies responsible for development aid and assistance, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and donor and recipient Member States of the Union. Strategies for attracting resources, financial support, investment incentives and projects required in order to motivate and promote investment for development of the information society and the establishment of relevant infrastructure, systems and services in rural areas and in remote and isolated communities.
- e) Concrete actions required to address the challenges of convergence.
- f) A special initiative highlighting and raising awareness of the importance of developing technical standards for the global information society and also addressing overlapping work in this area.

B Policy and regulatory frameworks

27 Policy and regulatory frameworks are particularly critical for creating an environment that is conducive to investment.

28 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Enhanced programmes of assistance, for ICT policy-making and to agencies regulating telecommunications.
- b) The creation of forums for the exchange of experience, along the lines of the ITU Global Symposium for Regulators.

C Assessment of the digital divide

29 There is a need for definitions and programmes to describe and quantify the extent of the digital divide and keep it under regular assessment, with a view to measuring progress made in bridging the gap, and tracking global progress in the use of ICTs to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. This should help in enhancing scientific and technical performance across countries over time, so as to ensure consistent, effective and significant international cooperation for overcoming the digital divide.

30 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Development of mechanisms that describe and quantify the digital divide. These mechanisms should contribute towards:
 - 1) regular assessment of the digital divide in order to evaluate performances across developing countries over time;
 - 2) provision of data allowing for the enhancement of the actions and programmes implemented to bridge the digital divide;
 - 3) measuring the effectiveness of international cooperation for bridging the digital divide.
- b) Development of a number of qualitative and quantitative benchmarks and indicators covering the various dimensions of e-strategies such as infrastructure, legal and regulatory

framework, capacity to use and develop content and applications, including e-government, e-education, e-health and e-commerce.

- c) The need to identify barriers that hinder countries in overcoming the digital divide and to propose measures required at the international level, including financial assistance, to overcome these barriers.

D Participation in research and development in the field of ICTs

31 In order to bridge the digital divide, there is a need for more participation of developing countries in research and development in the field of ICTs, for developing technical and scientific self-reliance.

32 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Joint public/private initiatives aimed at helping developing countries to master the most recent technological developments in the field of ICTs.
- b) Adoption of appropriate measures in order to establish new partnership mechanisms in this area among different countries, especially between developed and developing countries.
- c) Development and implementation of South-South cooperation approaches in this area.

II ICTs as a tool for economic and social development - and meeting the Millennium Development Goals

E Human resource development

33 Human resource development, education, training, knowledge and expertise transfer are essential in order to assist developing countries in strengthening their human, institutional and organizational capacity, with a view to increasing awareness, access and use of ICTs. Specific long-term capacity-building and training programmes need to be established.

34 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) A global training programme, including for developing country government officials, covering the main elements of ICT development such as the development and implementation of national e-strategies (e.g. e-government, e-health, e-education, e-commerce, etc.), strengthening of regulatory capabilities and elaboration of universal access plans.
- b) Development of an online database of training opportunities available worldwide.

F Community access to ICTs

35 Community information centres, such as post offices, libraries, schools and so forth, are a "seed" which can initiate or increase the participation of community inhabitants in the information society, particularly in remote and rural areas, helping them to form an equal and integral part of the evolving information society culture.

36 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Development of community connectivity indicators, with the goal of accelerating access of the population to ICT services.
- b) Dissemination of success stories in the application of ICTs for development.

G Special actions for developing countries, least developed countries, underprivileged populations and isolated and remote communities

37 Many developing countries are establishing more competitive ICT markets, and there is a need to mobilize investment, both from home and abroad, to meet the rising demand for services. Furthermore, there are countries, such as the least developed countries, small island developing

states and others, that face particular challenges in the information society and deserve special attention from the international community to ensure that they are not excluded from the global information economy and society.

38 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Proposals for the implementation of global and regional initiatives for the least developed countries, small island developing states and others that face particular challenges in the information society.
- b) Establishing sustainable telecommunity centres in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing states.

III Confidence and security in the use of ICTs

39 The development of the information society must occur in an environment of trust, for all stakeholders. The development of technical standards can contribute to this goal.

40 There is concern that information and communication technologies can potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security and may adversely affect the security of states in both civil and military fields.

41 It is considered necessary to prevent the use of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes.

42 The following actions are submitted to the WSIS preparatory process for consideration:

- a) Setting up appropriate mechanisms aimed at raising awareness of the importance of information and communication network security and of the resources available to the international community on this subject.
- b) Consideration of existing and potential threats in the sphere of information and communication network security, including the presence of computer pirates and viruses on the Internet, as well as methods and means of repelling them.
- c) Improving the exchange of technical information and international cooperation in information and communication network security.

- d) Contribution, bearing in mind ITU core competencies, to efforts within the UN system aimed at:
 - 1) assessing information security, including harmful interference with, or misuse of, information and telecommunication systems and information resources;
 - 2) establishing methods and organizations of emergency security incident response, sharing information and technologies on incident response;
 - 3) considering the elaboration in the long term, of an international convention on information and communication network security.

Annex 2

Information document for World Summit on the Information Society on the activities of ITU¹

Introduction

1 The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency within which governments and the private sector work together to coordinate the operation of telecommunication networks and services and advance the development of communications technology. Founded in 1865, ITU is based on a unique public/private partnership, with 189 Member States and over 650 Sector Members. Every time someone, somewhere, picks up a telephone and dials a number, answers a call on a mobile phone, sends a fax or receives an e-mail, takes a plane or a ship, listens to the radio, watches a favourite television programme or helps a small child master the latest radio-controlled toy, they benefit from the work of ITU. The role of ITU is thus central to the creation of the information society.

2 ITU is an inter-governmental organization based on the principle of national sovereignty. It has stewardship of four major international treaties: the Radio Regulations (RR), the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITR), and the ITU Constitution (CS) and Convention (CV). The supreme authority of the Union is the Plenipotentiary Conference, a meeting composed of delegations from the Union's Member States, held every four years; the next will be held in 2006.

3 The purposes of the Union are set out in its Constitution and Convention. They include commitments, *inter alia*:

– "to promote the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants";

– "to promote, at the international level, the adoption of a broader approach to the issues of telecommunications in the global information economy and society, by cooperating with other world and regional organizations and those non-governmental organizations concerned with telecommunications".

4 The original idea for a World Summit on the Information Society came from ITU Resolution 73 (Minneapolis, 1998) adopted at the Plenipotentiary Conference (Minneapolis, 1998). Originally proposed by Tunisia, Resolution 73 (Minneapolis, 1998) instructed the Secretary-General to place the question of holding a world summit on the agenda of the United Nations. In December 2001, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 56/183, which invites ITU to assume the leading managerial role in the executive secretariat of the Summit and its preparatory process.

Council

5 The ITU Council has passed a number of Resolutions and a Decision relating to WSIS, notably, Resolution 1158 at the 2000 session, Resolution 1179 at the 2001 session and Resolution 1196 (which established the terms of reference of the Council Working Group on WSIS (WG-WSIS)) and Decision 509 at the 2002 session. In addition, the Council decided at its 2002 meeting to convert its WSIS liaison committee into a full working group of the Council, open to all the membership.

ITU Council Working Group on WSIS

6 The Working Group of the Council on the WSIS, under the chairmanship of Mr Yuri G. Grin (Russia), held its first meeting on 21 September 2002 in Marrakesh. The working group

¹ This information document was reviewed and revised at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, Marrakesh, 23 September - 18 October 2002.

coordinated the drafting of this information document and the provision of a detailed framework for the substantive contribution of ITU to the Summit. This framework was discussed and revised at PP-02. Information on the work of the working group is available at:

http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/wsis_WG.html

7 A report of its work (PP-02/78) was transmitted by the Council to PP-02 (<http://www.itu.int/plenipotentiary/documents.asp>). Subsequently, an ad hoc group met during PP-02 to work further on ITU's contribution to the WSIS declaration of principles and action plan and a resolution of the Plenipotentiary Conference on WSIS.

The Strategic Plan of the Union

8 The purposes of the Union are further elaborated through the adoption of a four-year strategic plan. The Plenipotentiary Conference (Marrakesh, 2002) adopted a strategic plan for the period 2004-07. The plan sets out six main objectives of the Union, several of which are directly relevant to the information society:

Goal 1 - Maintain and extend international cooperation among all Member States and with appropriate regional organizations for the improvement and rational use of telecommunications of all kinds, taking the leading role in United Nations system initiatives on information and communication technologies (ICT).

Goal 2 - Assist in bridging the international digital divide in information and communication technologies (ICT), by facilitating development of fully interconnected and interoperable networks and services to promote global connectivity, and by taking a leading role in the preparations for, and taking due account of the relevant results of, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Goal 3 - Widen the Union's membership, extend and facilitate cooperative participation with an increasing number of organizations and administrations.

Goal 4 - Develop tools based on contributions from the membership, to safeguard the integrity and interoperability of networks.

Goal 5 - Continue to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of ITU's structures and services and their relevance to the membership.

Goal 6 - Disseminate information and know-how to provide the membership, particularly developing countries, with capabilities to respond to the challenges of privatization, competition, globalization and technological change.

The Sectors of the Union

9 The work of the Union is implemented through three Sectors: Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D). Each of these will make a key contribution to the success of the Summit. Their activities are described below. In addition, the work of the three Sectors is supported by the General Secretariat. Its activities relevant to the Summit are also described briefly.

Radiocommunication Sector (see www.itu.int/ITU-R/)

10 The mission of the ITU Radiocommunication Sector is, *inter alia*, to ensure rational, equitable, efficient and economical use of the radio-frequency spectrum by all radiocommunication services, including those using satellite orbits, and to carry out studies and adopt recommendations on radiocommunication matters.

11 ITU-R plays a vital role in the management of the radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits, finite natural resources which are increasingly in demand from a large number of services such as fixed, mobile, broadcasting, amateur, space research, meteorology, global positioning systems, environmental monitoring and last but not least, those communications services that ensure safety of life at sea and in the skies.

12 There are numerous examples of the contribution of the work of ITU-R to the achievement of the information society. These include:

- facilitating timely coordination between various systems in both space and terrestrial environments and developing spectrum regulation initiatives to better harmonize frequency allocations and the use of satellite orbits;
- facilitating the introduction of modern radio systems in rural areas, with special attention to developing countries, and giving assistance to Member States in spectrum management activities, e.g. through training, information meetings, seminars, the development of handbooks, and the provision of tools for automated spectrum management;
- accommodating new and expanded spectrum requirements through efficient management of the radio-frequency spectrum, free from harmful interference, while ensuring that the Radio Regulations and the rights of Member States are respected;
- improving international spectrum management techniques.

Telecommunication Standardization Sector (see www.itu.int/ITU-T/)

13 The mission of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector is to be the unique worldwide venue for industry and government to work together in developing, adopting, providing and promoting global consensus-based telecommunication Recommendations, or standards, for the information society. The Sector's key attribute is the ability to bring together all players in a global environment to develop Recommendations in areas where the membership recognizes that ITU-T has the necessary competence.

14 The major output of the Sector is some 70 000 pages of technical Recommendations that ensure the smooth functioning of the world's information and communication networks and services. One of the goals of ITU-T, as stated in the ITU Strategic Plan, is to "identify areas where Recommendations should be developed for the information society". Other goals include to "facilitate the interoperability of networks and services", to "be able to develop recommendations that may have regulatory or policy implications" and to "give appropriate consideration to the particular needs of developing countries".

15 As a contribution to the work of the WG-WSIS, the Director of TSB has put forward a set of proposals, including for the holding of a side-event during the summit with a working title "Enable access, remove barriers: The key role of international standards". The TSB contribution also stresses the fruitful experience of ITU in forging working partnerships between Member States and Sector Members, and the critical importance of global telecommunication standards to facilitate the global information economy and society. The full TSB contribution is available on the ITU website at: <http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/004e.doc>.

Telecommunication Development Sector (see www.itu.int/ITU-D/)

16 The mission of the Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) is to achieve its objectives based on the right to communicate of all the inhabitants of the world through access to infrastructure and information and communications services. In this regard, the mission is:

- to assist developing countries in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs), in facilitating the mobilization of technical, human and financial resources needed for their implementation, as well as in promoting access to ICTs;
- to promote the extension of the benefits of ICTs to all the world's inhabitants;
- to promote and participate in actions that contribute towards narrowing the digital divide; and,
- to develop and manage programmes that facilitate information flow geared to the needs of developing countries, with a focus on those with special needs, including the disabled and disadvantaged.

17 The major programmes of ITU-D are the six strands of the Istanbul Action Plan (see Box 1), which charts a course for developing countries to transform the digital divide into digital opportunities, covering: regulatory reform, telecommunication network development, e-strategies and e-services, economics and finance, human capacity building, and a special programme for least developed countries. In addition, underlying this work is a programme of information-sharing, notably through the joint publication, with the Strategy and Policy Unit, of the World Telecommunication Development Report, Trends in Telecom Reform, and other publications and databases.

18 The Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) has submitted a contribution explaining the work of ITU-D in relation to the World Summit and the Information Society. It is available on the ITU website at: <http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/004e.doc>. In particular, the contribution explains the different components of the Istanbul Action Plan (IsAP) and Resolution 30 (Istanbul, 2002) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-02) in Istanbul, on the role of the ITU-D in the WSIS. Actions being implemented with reference to Resolution 30 (Istanbul, 2002) to support the WSIS include, among others:

- the Istanbul Action Plan focusing on ways and means to foster the development of ICTs including basic infrastructure with priority given to the development of infrastructure for least served countries;
- support to the Istanbul Action Plan support through an information and statistics activity for the assessment of ICT development worldwide;
- presentation of the Istanbul Action Plan to the first meeting of the WSIS PrepCom in order to show the mechanisms by which the IsAP includes external initiatives on ICT development conducted by other bodies;
- support for WSIS regional preparatory meetings; and
- global and regional development initiatives carried out within the framework of the Istanbul Action Plan.

19 The contribution also contains a number of proposals and recommendations for the development of the Summit action plan. Some of the BDT actions of most relevance to the information society include the work on e-strategies/e-applications, the country case studies on Internet diffusion and the work of the Sector Reform Unit on assisting developing countries in developing enabling regulatory frameworks. In addition, the Telecommunication Data and Statistics Unit produces a number of publications that attempt to measure the diffusion of ICTs.

Box 1: Istanbul Action Plan

The Istanbul Action Plan charts a course for developing countries to transform the digital divide into digital opportunities. Bridging the digital divide means providing access to telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and promoting their use so that all segments of society can harness the opportunities of the information society. Digital opportunities not only serve as an engine for economic growth, they enable social, educational and medical progress. These goals hinge upon the rollout of ICT networks and services.

The Istanbul Action Plan is a comprehensive package that will enable developing countries to promote the equitable and sustainable deployment of affordable ICT networks and services. The core of the Istanbul Action Plan is a series of six programmes:

- 1) the **Regulatory Reform** programme focuses on practical tools and resources for regulatory bodies to engage in reform the most effectively to meet their national ICT development, access and use goals, creating safe investment opportunities and ensuring universal access to ICTs;
- 2) the **Technologies and Telecommunication Network Development** programme assists developing countries in the migration to new-generation technologies, including mobile, broadcasting, spectrum management, Internet protocol and multimedia to maximize utilization of appropriate new technologies in the development of ICT networks;
- 3) the **E-strategies and E-services/applications** programme fosters the implementation of value-added applications and Internet Protocol (networks and applications) in government, health, education, business, agriculture and other sectors, extending the social and economic benefits of ICTs to all segments of society;
- 4) the **Economics and Finance** including Cost and Tariff programme assists developing countries to ready themselves in a competitive environment where the focus has shifted from state funding of infrastructure and services to private sector investment, developing guidelines on economic analysis, financing policies and strategies that encourage lower costs for end users;
- 5) the **Human Capacity Building** programme assists developing countries to strengthen their human, institutional and organizational capacity through human resource management and development, expanding its reach to include the very policy-makers and regulators that are at the cutting edge of designing and implementing policies to increase access and use of ICTs;
- 6) the **Special Programme for the least developed countries** (LDCs) will be valued for its quality and timely service aimed at integrating LDCs into the world economy through telecommunication development and its ability to positively impact the delivery of assistance to LDCs.

The work of the six programmes will be complemented and enhanced by initiatives that foster digital participation, targeting the ICT needs of special groups including women, youth and indigenous peoples, which takes into consideration the impact of ICTs on these special groups.

Statistics and analysis explaining trends in ICT development are crucial for benchmarking countries, evaluating e-readiness and making informed national policy, legislation and regulation choices for ICT development. Statistics and analysis form the basis for objective

and measurable indicators on the state of the global information economy and society. The Istanbul Action Plan will expand and enhance ITU's current information collection and dissemination activities to assist countries in evaluating their level of e-readiness.

For more information, see: <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/isap/index.html>.

General Secretariat (see www.itu.int/osg)

20 The mission of the General Secretariat is to provide high-quality and efficient services to the membership of the Union, notably in the Plenipotentiary Conference, the Council, other conferences and meetings, TELECOM exhibitions and other events, as well as the dissemination of information - for example, through publications and on the ITU website. The General Secretariat also provides services and staff on detachment to the WSIS Executive Secretariat, which is located on ITU premises in Geneva.

21 There are a number of General Secretariat activities that are directly relevant to the Summit. These include:

- The ITU New Initiatives Programme, launched in 1999, which provides high-quality research and strategic workshops on issues of high current policy and regulatory relevance for ITU members. Recent topics covered include creating trust in critical network infrastructures, Internet diffusion, multilingual domain names, 3G licensing, broadband, etc. (see www.itu.int/ni).
- The ITU News, a specialist telecommunication journal published since 1869, which included a special issue on WSIS in December 2001 (see www.itu.int/itunews/).
- A new report, published in September 2002 by the Strategy and Policy Unit, on the mobile Internet, which includes analysis of the impact of mobile and wireless communication technologies in the new information society (see www.itu.int/spu).
- World telecommunication policy forums, which have been held most recently in 1998 (on Trade in Telecommunications) and 2001 (on IP Telephony).
- World TELECOM-03, a trade exhibition and forum which will take place in Geneva, 12-18 October 2003, just a few weeks before the first phase of WSIS.
- Studies relating to IMT-2000 continue to be carried out by the Sectors of the Union.

Conclusion

22 The specialized work of ITU in the fields of spectrum management, numbering, assistance to developing countries, standards development, international cooperation and the dissemination of information, is central to the creation of the information society, and vice versa. ITU is playing the leading managerial role in the preparatory process for the Summit. The unique structure of ITU, as a public/private partnership, provides valuable experience in bringing together the different stakeholders to work together towards common goals. ITU is not just talking about creating the information society, it is doing it.
