Citizens' Union Paremvassi

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WSIS WORKING DOCUMENTS
(DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION)

1. The Internet is a *global public good*, which can be regulated only at global level. The World Summit on the Information Society therefore will constitute an appropriate framework within which the roles of the various stakeholders, the government, the business sector and civil society can be defined.

2. The private sector's role is instrumental but it should operate within a regulatory framework, which will promote competition and innovation. The public sector should also have a significant involvement by offering goods and services at little or no cost. Other governance decisions should promote ubiquitous access, security and respect for basic human rights. We must guard against unharnessed technology development, which may result in a greater digital divide and social exclusion.

3. Digital rights should include security and reliability of digital products and services, minimal and well-balanced use of censorship or legal restrictions to access to the Internet, equivalence of rights in the "physical" and the "virtual" world and the possibility of legal protection from unreasonable use of resources e.g. compensation for spamming or unauthorized access to equipment.

4. Transfer of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and knowledge as well as free provision of ICT infrastructure, from the more developed to the less developed sectors of the community, locally as well as globally, is a key factor in overcoming the digital divide. All stakeholders can contribute towards this direction. Use of ICT itself (e-learning, e-education) can also accelerate this process.

5. Research must aim not only to increase productivity and competitiveness of the private sector but it must also promote greater participation, increase in employment etc.

6. ICT offers a unique possibility for citizens to increase their participation in government decision-making. We support the development of E-Democracy initiatives in every community at local, national or global level. The online Forum created for citizens and NGOs to participate in the process of the European Convention is a good example of such use. In addition, ICT can increase the *transparency* of public and private organizations. E-Government initiatives should become interactive so that citizen participation and monitoring of government decision making becomes possible.

7. Examples of good practices whether from the private or public sector or civil society should be identified, analyzed and disseminated in order to stimulate progress in the right direction.

7. Open source software should be promoted and encouraged. The low cost of its initial acquisition and subsequent updates facilitates its distribution and helps bridge the gap between poorer and richer sectors of the community. In addition, often it outperforms products of traditional corporations because it taps into knowledge shared by the whole community. The successful uptake of Linux demonstrates the potential of the open source methods. Tools which form the basis of the digital world, such as Microsoft WINDOWS should be considered as serious candidates for this method of distribution.

8. Recent technological advances have increased exponentially the amount of electronic footsteps left behind by all average citizens in their everyday life. From sensitive data,

like credit-worthiness to consumer preferences, governments and private sector corporations are in the position to have access to a large amount of information regarding specific individuals. Regulation should be put in place to restrict possible abuse of such powers and safeguard each person's basic right to privacy.

9. The Internet has, since its creation, been seen as the forefront of free speech and free exchange thus increasing the circulation of public domain material. In addition, due to the Internet and digital technology, works free of copyright restrictions have become easily accessible to millions of people to enjoy and incorporate into new digital works of their own. It is imperative that *copyright laws*, do not strangle this creative process by imposing practically unlimited restrictions on use of existing works, as has increasingly been the case recently, but should strike a balance between protection of intellectual property and freedom to use previous achievements in the creation of future works.

10. The Lisbon European Council (March 2000) set the ambitious objective of the E.U becoming "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" recognizing the ICT's crucial contribution in this direction. We fully support the eEurope initiatives and associated action plans which aim to improve not only the technology infrastructure but the content, services and applications provided as well as the development of skills. We also believe that support should be given to the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity in the digital world.

Athens, 20-5-03

Citizens' Union PAREMVASSI
http://www.paremvassi.gr
e-mail: paremvassi@ath.forthnet.gr

Pericles Vassilopoulos (Direcror)
Nita Kyriacopoulou (Member of the Board)