

**STATEMENT MADE BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)
TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE 2 OF WSIS/PREPCOM2
(Geneva, 26.2.2003)**

Chair, Excellencies, Delegates

The World Health Organization expresses the concern that "health" continues to be seen as a narrowly defined ICT application, as evident from the draft declaration (document WSIS/PC-2/DT/1 (Rev.2)-E) rather than being part of a comprehensive health system. This approach carries the risk that e-health is viewed as number of discreetly defined applications (i.e. telepathology, -dermatology etc) rather than in a broad systematic manner.

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 2001 report released by the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, which specifically mentions ICT.

WHO's vision for the Information Society is for open, equitable and unrestricted access to reliable (or evidence based) information for health, a global public good, by making full use of ICT in health system development. 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.

We hope that at the end of your deliberations health will feature more prominently in the draft declaration, and not just under "ICT application".

I thank you for your attention and consideration.