



## **The World Summit on the Information Society: "From Geneva to Tunis"**

**OPENING CEREMONY**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you here in Hammamet to this important Preparatory Meeting, PrepCom 1, of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

This session will be crucial in shaping the focus and output of the second phase of WSIS. I would like to express my thanks to the Government of Tunisia for the warm hospitality extended to us, for making our stay comfortable and for providing us with first-rate working conditions. The excellent atmosphere in this charming seaside resort will help make our difficult undertaking a lot easier.

Hammamet will mark a critical turning point in the task of building the Information Society. This is the first Preparatory Committee session of WSIS that will be held outside Geneva, and it symbolizes the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the WSIS process.

As Hannibal crossed the Alps from Tunisia to make a landmark in history, we have today crossed the Alps to Tunisia representing the migration of WSIS from North to South.

By so doing, we are building the bridges to connect different peoples across geographical, knowledge and information divides. At the same time, we are beginning to connect the dots embedded in the WSIS Action Plan that will form a truly inclusive and equitable Information Society.

It is not by chance that we are assembled today in Tunisia. As you know well, it was the Government of Tunisia that first proposed a Summit on the Information Society at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis, back in 1998. ITU then placed it on the agenda of the United Nations, and the General Assembly adopted a Resolution endorsing the Summit in two phases, with the first phase to be held in Geneva and the second phase to follow in Tunis.

Let me explain the reasons why ITU proposed the holding of a World Summit on the Information Society. These were basically three:

- To raise awareness among political leaders, at the highest level, of the implications of the Information Society and the new challenges that it presents
- To get their commitments to tackle the injustices of the digital divide, and
- To develop new legal and policy frameworks, appropriate to the demands of cyberspace.

With the adoption of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action by 175 countries, the Geneva phase of the Summit has achieved the goal of raising awareness among the global political leadership of the growing digital divide in our world and of the importance of ICTs for the development of an inclusive and more equitable Information Society.

As the Geneva phase succeeded in raising awareness among the political leadership, the Tunis phase must have a strong commitment from the Heads of State and Government to go from words to actions.

In order to tackle the injustices of the digital divide, we have to transit from mere declarations to real actions and the Tunis Summit should become a “Summit of Solutions”.

Defining a far-reaching implementation plan, which goes beyond 2005, to fully realize all the action lines agreed in Geneva will be the real challenge and focus of the Tunis Phase. I therefore call upon all stakeholders, governments civil society, private sector and international organizations to once again collaborate actively to find common ground for these truly global issues and make the Information Society a reality for all.

ITU had the challenging responsibility of organizing the first phase of the Summit and will again assume the lead organizational role in the second phase. In this difficult task I ask you for your strong support.

As you are aware, the WSIS process relies entirely on voluntary contributions. That is why we are engaged in the WSIS-2005 Fundraising Campaign.

I am very pleased to report that we have made much progress to date. Several contributions have already been announced by governments and other stakeholders.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the governments of Japan, Korea, Namibia, the Netherlands, the Holy See, Spain, as well as the ITU, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Federal Credit Union and the International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, for their generous financial contributions to the Tunis phase.

I have also been assured of more contributions in the future to help us meet our fundraising campaign goal and I am expecting new donors to take the opportunity of this Preparatory Meeting to announce their contributions.

I would also like to thank the governments of Canada, Japan, Korea, Spain, Switzerland and Tunisia as well as the ITU, UNESCO, KDDI Corporation, the Organisation Tunisienne de l'Education et de la Famille and the Tunisian Association for Communications for their in-kind contributions, including secondment of staff to the WSIS Executive Secretariat.

ITU has been committed to helping the world communicate for 139 years. That commitment grew even stronger last December with the success of the first phase of the Summit.

The world now looks to you with great expectations that the goals and partnerships agreed to in Geneva will be brought to life in Tunis.

The Declaration and Action Plan are in place and many of our WSIS partners are already working towards fulfilling the goals these documents outline. Today they look to us for support and guidance, not endless discussion on detail and process.

We must remember that this is to be a Summit of Solutions. It is up to us to provide clear direction on the path to be taken to the top of this Summit.

I welcome you once again to Hammamet as we inaugurate the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society and wish you every success with this very important Prepcom 1.

Thank you.

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