

**Statement to the Plenary Session on Prepcom 1, WSIS Phase 2, Hammamet
25 June 2004 - presented by George Christensen, AMARC-Africa**

Civil society organisations, participating in the World Summit on the Information Society believe a just and equitable information society must be people-centred, based on respect for fundamental human rights and giving priority to the reduction of poverty and the implementation of sustainable development.

During the Geneva phase of the Summit, civil society organisations played a full and active role. Despite significant constraints on dialogue and communication within the process itself, civil society organisations contributed extensively and with good effect.

At the completion of the Geneva Summit we can acknowledge three outcomes: two intergovernmental documents the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action, and one civil society document a declaration titled "Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs" that was presented to governments at the final plenary in Geneva.

Although there are several points on which the civil society position is different from that of the governments we propose the Declaration of Principles should not be re-opened.

The key principles in the intergovernmental Declaration - on sustainable development and the millennium development goals, and on human rights and freedom of expression - should form the measures against which actions in the second phase are judged.

On the other hand, the Plan of Action, is not a document we can accept to work with. It was hastily drafted in the final stages of the Geneva Summit, with little input from civil society. In certain important respects it is in contradiction with the Declaration of principles and it does not adequately provide a basis for action and implementation.

We recommend this be reviewed to establish a new and measurable basis for action.

As we commence the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society we would like to re-state our commitment to the priorities set out in the civil society declaration presented in Geneva copies are available here today.

We also wish to remind government that the role of civil society is not simply one of assisting with implementation but also of observation, monitoring and holding of governments to account. During the second phase of the Summit we will continue to provide a constructive but critical input to the process. We ask for the best conditions to do so in the firm belief that our contribution will assist in achieving a better outcome.
