Statement by Ms. Susanne Teltscher
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by assuring you that UNCTAD is fully committed to contributing to the second phase of WSIS, to take place in Tunis in November 2005.

Last Friday, UNCTAD concluded its eleventh quadrennial ministerial conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. At this conference, UNCTAD member states confirmed their commitment to bridging the digital divide and to building an inclusive information society, which will require partnership and cooperation among all stakeholders, governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

Let me take this opportunity to share with you some concrete proposals on how UNCTAD could contribute to the preparatory process of the Tunis phase of the Summit and beyond.

Mr Chairman,

The Geneva Summit set out the broad framework for building an information society. It was necessary and timely. This was only the first step and more attention should now be placed on the substantive content of the work to be undertaken in-between now and Tunis. We need now to identify the most urgent development needs and policy solutions to address these development needs. Pragmatic solutions to the two key outstanding issues of the Geneva phase – the issue of Internet governance and financing of ICT - should also be placed in this broader development-oriented approach.

The proposed thematic meetings could help in focusing on the substantive preparations of WSIS II and, therefore, should take a central place in the Tunis phase. These meetings should concentrate on the development dimension of the information society and should result in concrete outcomes and real commitments by different stakeholders. These outcomes should be closely linked to the Geneva Plan of Action.

UNCTAD is ready to contribute to the Tunis phase of the WSIS, as far as available resources permit. There are two main areas in which we could make a contribution. One is in the area of ICT for economic growth and trade development, including e-business applications. The other is in the area of information society indicators, in particular in measuring ICT usage in enterprises.

Consequently, we are proposing two Thematic Meetings to be held during the Tunis phase of the Summit, which would be jointly organized with other international and regional organizations.

The first Thematic Meeting would focus on the subject of the "Economic and Social Implications of ICTs" for developing countries. This meeting would be jointly organized with the ILO, the OECD, the ITC, and supported by the Canadian IDRC. I will leave it to my

colleague from the OECD, one of the co-organizers, to provide you with further details on this thematic meeting during his intervention.

A second area of work where UNCTAD is ready to make a contribution relates to ICT indicators and statistics, crucial to monitoring information society developments and formulating ICT policies. The Geneva Plan of Action calls for the development of statistical indicators for benchmarking and performance evaluation, to follow up the implementation of the Plan of Action and to track global progress in the use of ICTs. It also calls upon all countries and regions to develop tools so as to provide statistical information, and to set up coherent and internationally comparable indicator systems. This Thematic Meeting will present action that has been taken at the national and international level to implement this goal, as an input to the Tunis phase of the Summit.

In this context, a Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development has been created among UNCTAD, the ITU, the OECD, UNESCO, the UN ICT Task Force, the UN Regional Commissions and the World Bank. This Partnership was officially launched at the occasion of UNCTAD XI last week. Under the umbrella of this Partnership, a WSIS Thematic Meeting is being proposed on the subject of "Measuring the Information Society". This meeting would be held in Geneva in February 2005, right before PrepCom2.

We have submitted more detailed descriptions of the two proposed Thematic Meetings to the WSIS Executive Secretariat, which could be distributed to member States. We hope that this PrepCom will provide further guidance on the role of Thematic Meetings in the preparatory process.

Finally, last year, the United Nations General Assembly requested UNCTAD, in collaboration with the UN ICT Task Force and the ITU, to update its publication on ICT Development Indices, as part of its contribution to the second phase of the WSIS, and this work is currently under way.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by, again, assuring you that UNCTAD is fully committed to contributing to the second phase of the Summit and we look forward to collaborating with you on this important venture.

Thank you for your attention.