Statement by
Mr Abdul Waheed Khan
Assistant Director-General for
Communication and Information

on the occasion of the
Preparatory Meeting (PrepCom-1)
World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis Phase)
Hammamet, Tunisia, 24-26 June 2004

Hammamet, 24 June 2004
Mr President of the Preparatory Committee,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of UNESCO, congratulations, Mr President. We wish you every success over the coming 18 months. May I also thank Tunisia for its wonderful hospitality.

UNESCO is gratified that the international community recognized, through the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, the values and principles that UNESCO has been promoting consistently as essential to build inclusive and pluralist knowledge societies.

These are

• Freedom of expression;
• Universal access to information and knowledge
• Preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, multilingualism and local content; and
• Equal access to quality education.

UNESCO’s approach for this second phase is to illustrate how we can build “Knowledge Societies" by operationalizing these four principles and translating them into action.

UNESCO has been very proactive in responding to the Action Plan. Almost half of 150 items fall within UNESCO’s fields of competence and have been anticipated in its programme and budget.

We have developed a transparent reporting mechanism, the “UNESCO WSIS Action Directory”¹, to provide online information on how UNESCO is implementing the Plan of Action. We would be pleased to share this platform with other Organizations which could use it to publicize their own contributions in an open, flexible, and customisable way.

UNESCO wants to maintain the momentum from Phase I with a strong presence in the process and events leading up to Tunis, including active participation in the work of the High Level Summit Organizing Committee and any structure for implementation of the Plan of Action.

¹ http://www.unesco.org/wsisdirectory
We wish to contribute to the work of the Task Force on Financing Mechanisms and the Working Group on Internet Governance in our areas of competence. We have already published a Position Statement setting out the principles that must be safeguarded in the debate on Internet Governance.

In addition to our own projects to implement the Plan of Action, we have already communicated to the WSIS Executive Secretariat our proposals for a series of thematic meetings to share solutions in the areas of education, sciences, culture and communication. However, some guidelines on the organization and expected outputs of such thematic meetings are needed now.

We will ensure that UNESCO’s activities will address the issues of cultural and linguistic diversity and the importance of independent and pluralistic media.

We support the idea of using the second phase as a platform to share solutions, wise practices, and lessons from current implementation experiences. We believe the emphasis must be on practical implementation of the Plan of Action. It is crucial that this process has full engagement with civil society and the private sector as action needs all stakeholders.

We therefore endorse initiatives that capitalize on the network of relationships that have been forming around ICT4D in Geneva. We need to put in place formal mechanisms for stocktaking, to foster action-oriented networks, to identify potential partners and to build multi-stakeholder alliances.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Collaboration is the key.

I thank you