Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-2) of the Tunis Phase of WSIS
Palais des Nations, Geneva, 17-25 February 2005

Report on the WSIS Thematic Meeting
"Measuring the Information Society"
Geneva, 7-9 February 2005

Mr. Chairman,

The WSIS Thematic Meeting "Measuring the Information Society" took place in Geneva, Palais des Nations, from 7 to 9 February 2005. It was hosted by UNCTAD and organized by members of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which includes 11 international organizations: the ITU, OECD, UNCTAD, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UN Regional Commissions, the UN ICT Task Force, the World Bank and Eurostat. The meeting was chaired by the Director-General of Statistics Finland, Ms. Heli Jeskanen-Sundström, and I have the honour to make this report on her behalf.

The meeting addressed the subject of the statistical measurement of the information society, including a core list of ICT indicators that could be collected by all countries and harmonized at the international level; the needs of national statistical offices in developing countries as regards technical assistance in the compilation of ICT indicators; and mechanisms to measure impact and to quantify the relevance and contribution of ICT towards improving development and achieving the MDGs.

The meeting was attended by more than 250 delegates from 85 United Nations member countries, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the business community.

The meeting was held as a direct response to the Geneva Plan of Action, which in paragraph 28, calls for "A realistic international performance evaluation and benchmarking (both qualitative and quantitative), through comparable statistical indicators and research results … taking into account different national circumstances."

The main outcome of this Thematic Meeting is an agreed upon core list of ICT indicators comparable at the international level, which could be collected by all countries. The proposed list was the result of an intensive consultation process by members of the Partnership with all national statistical offices and experts in the field of measuring ICT. The core list contains three sets of indicators: basic ICT infrastructure indicators, ICT access and usage by households and individuals, and ICT access and usage by enterprises. Such internationally agreed indicators and definitions should be used as a basis for data collection to increase comparability between countries.

The final conclusions of the meeting, including the list of core ICT indicators, are available on the WSIS web site of Thematic Meetings, and will be distributed during this PrepCom.
The list will be expanded in the future by statistical indicators covering areas such as ICT in education, government or health.

In addition, the meeting discussed ICT impact indicators, which are an essential tool for the policy and development planning process, and in particular for measuring progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. The meeting recognized that while collecting ICT impact

indicators is a long-term process, the planning, development and design of ICT impact indicators needs to be factored in during the earliest measurement planning stages. There is a need to formalize the link between ICT and the MDGs especially with regard to measurement.

A second major topic addressed by the meeting was the statistical capacity building in developing countries - a key requirement to improving the production of information society statistics. As a result from the meeting, the global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, with the support of the international community, is called upon to engage in activities to assist the statistical community in developing countries to build, or co-ordinate the building of, the capacity for the collection of comparable information society statistics.

Mr Chairman,

This Thematic Meeting and the work of the global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, constitutes an important step forward in the process of measuring and monitoring the information society. It is an essential input to the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action, the preparation of the Tunis phase of the Summit, and the follow-up to Tunis. It is, therefore, very important that this input will be taken into account in the final document of the Tunis Summit.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.