

THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

GENEVA 2003
TUNIS 2005



WSIS Newsletter

online version: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/news/news01.htm>

WSIS Newsletter Opening Announcement by ITU Secretary-General

“It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of the World Summit on the Information Society Newsletter. The Newsletter is intended to pro-



Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General
International Telecommunication Union

vide those interested in the Summit with information on Summit preparations, as well as issues of relevance to the Summit and the Information Society as a whole. Important topics from the key stakeholders will also be featured in future editions, so your active contribution is encouraged.

The evolution of the Information Society concerns everyone. The World Summit on the Information Society is designed to be a true meeting of minds bringing together all those concerned with the further development of communications and the coming of the knowledge society. The Summit aims to

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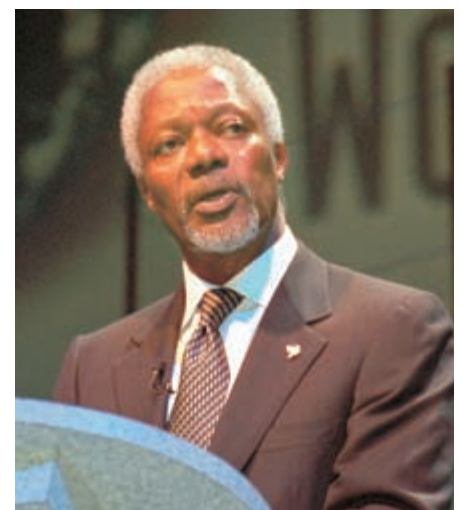
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bring together representatives from the highest levels of government, the private sector and civil society to address a broad range of questions concerning the Information Society and to move towards a common vision and understanding of this societal transformation.

Preparations for the Summit are well on track and the event is generating high levels of excitement and expectation. The coming months should see accelerated progress in WSIS activities, particularly in the preparation of the PrepCom-1 meeting from 1-5 July in Geneva and regional conferences. This inaugural edition provides information on the upcoming events and serves as a platform to facilitate the open dialogue essential for a successful Summit. Your comments on the Newsletter are welcome.”

Message from the UN Secretary-General

“A technological revolution is transforming society in a profound way. If harnessed and directed properly, Information and Communication Technolo-



Kofi Annan UN Secretary-General

gies (ICTs) have the potential to improve all aspects of our social, economic and cultural life.

ICTs can serve as an engine for development in the 21st century, and as an effective instrument to help us achieve all the goals of the Millennium Declaration - the landmark document adopted by a record number of leaders when they met for the Millennium Summit to address the key challenges of our time.

Yet the majority of the world's population has yet to benefit from the new

The Coppet Workshop

OFCOM Director General Marc Furrer originally asked me to help gather a small group of 'experts' to meet in Coppet. And what was the goal of this gathering? Ideas, ideas to help the World Summit on the Information Society be a success.

Our number soon grew. A lot of people are interested in WSIS. Almost seventy people came to Coppet, some from as far away as Shanghai, Johannesburg and Chicago. They were willing, even eager, to give their time and energy to help make WSIS work.

So an enthusiastic and diverse group of people came together in the very pleasant surroundings of the Chateau de Coppet to brainstorm. Our group included experts on different aspects of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and the Digital Divide.

Coppet was never intended to be an official meeting. We were there to 'brainstorm'. There was no fixed agenda but we did outline some possible workshop goals. First, we hoped to help better define and articulate what the Summit hopes to achieve. Second, to look at what topics/themes and Key players would help make the Summit more successful. Third, we wanted to

technology. That is why the Millennium Summit recognized the key role of partnerships involving governments, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders in putting ICTs in the service of development.

That is why, a year before, at the opening ceremony of the TELECOM 99 global event, I launched an appeal to governments and to the private sector to support the ITU initiative to convene a World Summit on the Information Society.

explore what practical steps need to be taken to prepare for the Summit and finally to draft our recommendations. We agreed that speakers would not be identified and everyone was encouraged to speak openly, to speak their minds. They did, passionately.

Summit participation was the most contentious issue. What exactly will it be? What role will different participants have? Discussions highlighted the difficulty of satisfying the varying expectations of governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, the media and other non-governmental organizations.

There was general agreement that 'A Networked Summit' with a number of different platforms would be the most productive way to respond. The 'Political Summit' would take center stage. But that would be surrounded by platforms on 'Governance Issues', 'Thoughts for the Future', 'Issues for Society' and more.

This format would give the Heads of State their due in the center but

This global gathering will be a unique opportunity for all key players to develop a shared vision of ways to bridge the digital divide and create a truly global information society. It will be an opportunity to develop specific solutions and tools and adopt a realistic and viable plan of action. As I said in my report to the Millennium Summit, the digital divide can - and will - be bridged. The World Summit on the Information Society is a crucial step towards this end."

also offer some very active spaces with opportunities for good cross-fertilization between platforms. It would also respond to another important issue -



left to right: H.E. Ambassador Hatem Ben Salem, Mr. Marc Furrer, Ms. Hilary Bowker, Mr. Yoshio Utsumi

the need for a change. Many workshop participants stressed the importance of a new approach. They believe that to succeed WSIS must be, and must be seen as, different and more than a 'typical' UN political summit.

There was much more. Participants argued. They reasoned. Sometimes they agreed. Ultimately, they tried to figure out how best to make the Summit work and work well.

Hilary Bowker, Moderator, Coppet Workshop

Coppet Workshop, Interview with Marc Furrer, Director General, Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), Bienne, Switzerland.

WSIS Workshop, Coppet, December 5-6, 2001: a seminar on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), was organized by OFCOM, and held in the Coppet chateau, on the outskirts of Geneva.

Mr. Furrer, what is OFCOM's role in the preparatory process of the Summit on the Information Society?

Marc Furrer: OFCOM has a mandate from the Swiss Government to assist in the first phase of WSIS in 2003. Following the decision of the ITU Council in June 2001 to organize this phase in Geneva, OFCOM immediately set up a Swiss Secretariat. The Swiss Executive Secretariat is located in Geneva and is run by Daniel Stauffacher, Ambassador and Delegate of the Swiss Government to WSIS. Mr. Stauffacher works closely with Mr. Utsumi (Secretary-General of ITU) in jump-starting, promoting

and organizing the preparations for the Summit at a diplomatic level.

What were your objectives in organizing the Coppet workshop?

Marc Furrer: What I was particularly aiming for were substantial and convincing results. The Swiss Government is not only aware of the problems we face in our country by the Information Society - a national strategy has been developed to deal with the issue - but also of the problem of the digital divide between the countries of the North and South. To tackle these problems at both the national and international level, as well as define the issues to be discussed at the Summit, OFCOM, together with ITU, launched the first brainstorming workshop at Coppet. I felt it was important, therefore, to invite to Coppet, people with the right know-how and experience in the Information Society as opposed to sticking to any criteria based on protocol or title. This was a difficult task considering that this new society represents stakeholders from all sectors - government, business, civil society and NGOs.

But I was counting on innovative ideas and I was not disappointed. With the results of Coppet, I believe the ITU and the WSIS Executive Secretariat have a good base to launch their preparations for the Summit, as well as an important network of qualified people to include in the consultation process.

So, then, you are satisfied with the results obtained at Coppet?

Marc Furrer: Yes, I'm very pleased. Not just because of the large number of experts in the information field who agreed to come to the workshop, but also because of the personal investment these people brought to the ITU challenge - a challenge to find a common vision of the Information Society that was met with the help of all the participants. I hope, and this is my personal vision of WSIS, that the Summit will result in the creation of this vision, one that will include, and serve, every one in the world. I hope, too, that WSIS will develop very concrete proposals to eliminate the digital divide and become a powerful aid to social and economic development.

OFCOM website:

<http://www.ofcom.ch/en>

United Nations Adopts Resolution of the World Summit on the Information Society

The UN General Assembly, on 21 December 2001, adopted Resolution (A/RES/56/183) endorsing the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), to be convened under the patronage of the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, with the International Telecommunication Union taking the lead role in its preparation along with interested UN organizations and the host countries.

The origin of the Summit is ITU Plenipotentiary Conference Resolution 73, which led to consultations among the UN agencies and agreement on the need to hold a World Summit on the Information Society. The governing body of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Council, at its 2001 session, endorsed the holding of the **World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in two phases: in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005.**

The Summit will address the broad range of questions concerning the Information Society and move towards a common vision and understanding

of this societal transformation. The Summit is expected to adopt a Declaration of Principles and an Action Plan to facilitate the effective growth of the Information Society and to help bridge the Digital Divide. It aims to bring together representatives from the highest levels of government, the private sector, civil society and NGOs. It will offer a unique opportunity for the world community to discuss and give shape to the Information Society.

The full text of the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/56/a56r183.pdf>

Paving the way for the Summit : Official Preparatory Meetings Announced

PrepCom 1: First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee

As the initial major step in the Summit preparatory process, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS PrepCom-1) will be held at the International Conference Centre in Geneva from July 1 - 5, 2002. The objective of this PrepCom is to establish a framework for the Summit and the preparatory process. In addition to government delegations, representatives from UN specialized agencies, from private sector, from civil society and from other major stakeholders will participate. PrepCom-1 will also decide on the modalities governing participation of the private sector and civil society.

A total of three Preparatory Committees are planned. The dates and venue of the second and third meetings (PrepCom-2 and PrepCom-3) will be decided by PrepCom-1.

Contribute to the Summit

The World Summit on the Information Society needs, and deserves, your contribution. It is an ambitious project requiring substantial resources, both intellectual expertise and funding. You can have an impact on The World Summit on the Information Society - and by extension, the world - both through your generous financial support and your continuing intellectual engagement.

The work of the World Summit on the Information Society Executive Sec-

Regional Conferences Africa

The first regional conference puts Africa's concerns on the Summit agenda. Africa intends to be a full partner at the Summit on the Information Society. For this reason, President Alpha Oumar Konaré is taking the lead in hosting the African Regional Preparatory Conference in Bamako, on May 28, 29, and 30, 2002. Heads of state, ministers, parliamentarians, business leaders, and members of civil society from all over Africa are invited to Bamako to share their vision of Africa's place in the Information Society.

Website available end of March 2002:

www.bamako2002.org.ml
www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002/

Under consideration but yet to be confirmed by the Secretariat are the following regional conferences:

- Pan-European, Bucharest, Romania
November 7-9, 2002
- Asia-Pacific, Tokyo, Japan
January 2003 (To be confirmed)
- Americas, Chile (To be confirmed)

Thematic Meetings

A series of thematic meetings

retariat is made possible through the generosity of a growing number of supporters that share the Summit's goals and objectives

We are pleased to acknowledge the special role these supporters are playing in the Summit.

Financial support and gifts in kind:

Government of Switzerland
Government of Tunisia
Government of Japan
World Meteorological Organization
International Telecommunication Union

addressing specific problems and challenges associated with the information society will take place in 2002 and 2003. These thematic meetings may be organized by States, UN agencies and other major stakeholders. The reports from these thematic meetings will also provide input to the Summit preparation process. Following is a partial list of thematic meetings which have been forwarded to the Secretariat.

- Dakar, 7 - 9 April 2002:
E-Governance and Partnership
(postponed to September 2002)
- Palermo, 11 - 12 April 2002:
The International Conference on E-Government for Development
<http://www.palermoconference2002.com>
- Paris, 22 - 23 April 2002:
Civil Society Participation in the WSIS
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/ict_ngo/ngos.shtml
- Mainz, 27 - 28 June 2002:
Science and Education
<http://www.nethics.net/ici2002/institutions.html>
- Bangkok, 17 - 19 February 2003:
Broadcasting
<http://aibd.org.my/>

Staff Secondment

Governments: Japan, Korea, Spain, Switzerland
United Nations Agencies: UNESCO, UNITAR
Private Sector: KDDI Corporation
Civil Society: Canton of Geneva

UNESCO prepares the World Summit on the Information Society :

Infostructure, public domain of information, freedom of expression and education in the Information Society.

Consultations with non-governmental organizations

February 2002

UNESCO with its unique mandate to promote the free exchange of ideas and knowledge will have a key role in the WSIS preparation, incorporating all the ethical, legal, socio-cultural and ethnic dimensions of the Information Society and helping to grasp the opportunities offered by the ICTs by placing the individual at its centre.

UNESCO wishes to encourage the broadest possible participation by decision-makers, professional communities, representatives of civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners and the private sector in a debate on the conditions for the development of an information society providing equitable access to information for all.

In the present round of consultations, UNESCO invites non-gov-

ernmental international and regional organizations and professional associations to contribute to the WSIS preparation process.

During the month of February 2002, four separate consultative meetings were held in UNESCO Headquarters to examine the following themes:

Theme I «Infostructure in developing countries»: formulation of national, regional and international policies to strengthen institutional capacities and to create the conditions for equitable access for all to information, knowledge by using ICTs and traditional media.

Theme II «Cultural diversity and public domain of information»: establishment of a strong public domain of information, for the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity in order to promote the various forms of cultural expression.

Theme III «Freedom of expression in the Information Society»: ensure the respect for freedom of expression (promotion of independent and pluralistic on-line journalism, necessary limitations of freedom of expression -racism, etc...-) and right to information in cyberspace in an environment that is characterized by increasing convergence.

Theme IV «Education in and for the Information Society»: free access to education, the judicious use of ICTs as innovative and experimental tools to renew education improving the quality of teaching and learning, ICT literacy and other issues.

On the basis of the viewpoints of the professional communities represented, the four meetings are expected to formulate a set of proposals which will be forwarded as an input for the preparation of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the Summit.

The list of NGOs who participated in the consultation is available at : http://www.unesco.org/webworld/ict_ngo/ngos.shtml

For further information, please contact : M. Jean-Gabriel Mastrangelo, UNESCO -Information Society Division JG.Mastrangelo@unesco.org

To prepare the Summit, UNESCO will organize other activities on the issues within its mandate. These activities will be announced in due course through this newsletter and UNESCO Website : <http://www.unesco.org/>

Consultations with non-governmental organizations: UNESCO's role in WSIS

In February, UNESCO opened the first round of consultations with non-governmental organizations representing the professional communities working in the areas of education, science, culture, communication and information.

The meetings gathered more than fifty representatives of NGOs and networks of NGOs and focused

on the challenges of providing affordable and equitable access to information and knowledge for people worldwide.

The participants of each of the four consultative meetings formulated, on behalf of their professional communities, a set of proposals to be included in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action that the World Summit is expected to adopt. The consultations dealt with the following themes: Infostructures in developing countries; Cultural diversity, public domain

and fair use; Freedom of expression in the Information Society and Education in and for the Information Society.

Additional meetings including the African Regional Conference, the first official preparatory conference for the WSIS scheduled to take place in Bamako, and online forums are part of a series of key events aimed at furthering the NGOs consultative process that UNESCO has initiated.

The Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretariat of the World Summit on the Information Society has been established at the ITU headquarters, Geneva, with the following mandate:

- Facilitate the Summit preparatory process on behalf of all stakeholders;
- Prepare draft agendas and draft documents for the PrepComs;
- Keep all stakeholders updated about events in the field of information society and WSIS-preparation;
- Prepare progress reports on the preparatory process;

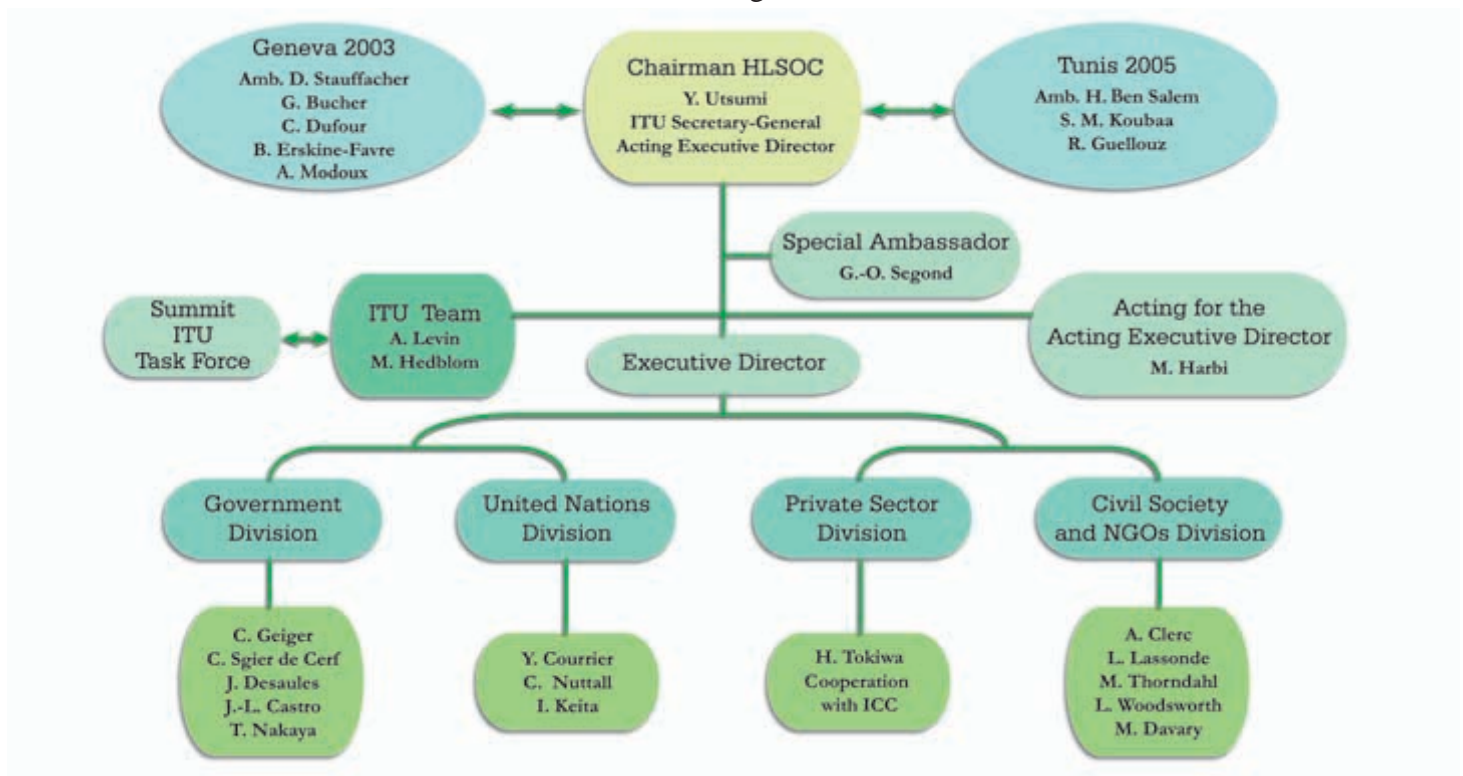
- Obtain sponsorship and funding for the preparatory process and the Summit.

The composition of the Executive Secretariat is as follows:

- Staff from Member States
- Staff from the UN specialized agencies participating in the HLSOC
- Staff from the private sector
- Staff from civil society

World Summit on the Information Society

Executive Secretariat Organizational Schema



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In addition to the Executive Secretariat, an internal coordination team has been established by the ITU:

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World Summit on the Information Society: From Buenos Aires to Porto Alegre - Debating the Issues, Spreading the Word

Citizen networks on the move

Some 700 participants from five continents - representatives of civil society, government and the private sector, including local authorities, and academics - met at the **II Global Congress of Citizen Networks in Buenos Aires, Global CN 2001, last year on December 5,6,7**. The theme: «Renewing Communities in the Digital Era.»

Community networks a.k.a freenets, telenets, or digital cities, is a term coined to define the various uses of the Internet and the information technologies that transform our society. New forms of civic associations in the digital era, these networks play an important role in strengthening the social fabric of any given society. They lobby for the rights of citizens the world over to be included in the new opportunities, knowledge, and jobs offered by the Information Society, as well as for participation in local policy making.

Civil Society and the Summit: interest and expectations

Information on the Summit was presented to participants of the Buenos Aires conference by an ES-Civil Society Division member at a congress plenary entitled «Community Networks and Globalization: Strategic Options». Since the yearly Global CN meetings are intended to bring participants up-to-date on the latest developments on information issues and stimulate discussion on viable options, the preparatory process of the Summit was seen as a unique opportunity for bringing the concerns of citizen networks to the international floor.

There was some debate, however, on the lessons learned from previous

inclusion of civil society in global initiatives, in particular the G8 Dot Force and the World Bank's Global Gateway program. Past experience shows the need for clarification of the role of non-for profit stakeholders in the decision-making process in order to avoid widening further the gulf between civil society and international organizations.

Work in progress: first Porto Alegre, then Montreal...

Many of the people present at the Buenos Aires conference met up at Porto Alegre II in February to continue the discussions and prepare proposals for civil society's participation in the Summit. If at Porto Alegre I (2001), the issues on the Information Society were barely touched on by social movements, they are now a major preoccupation.

Following the Porto Alegre forum, a series of thematic and regional meetings are being organized to further the discussions - notably Global CN 2002 in Montreal, and Global CN 2003 in Australia. The mobilization of civil society to take part in the preparatory process of the Summit will not only mark another step forward in the social agenda, but is fundamental to the success of the Summit that aims to include all points of view and create a real debate on this issues of the 21st century.

Web Sites for organizations cited:

- Global CN 2001:
www.globalcn2001.org
- Forum Social Mondial de Porto Alegre:
www.forumsocialmundial.org.br
- Civil Society Platform for the Summit: www.geneva2003.org

Launching the Campaign in Porto Alegre

«**Communication Rights in the Information Society**» (CRIS) is a campaign to ensure that communication rights are central to the Information Society and to the upcoming **World Summit on the Information Society**.

The campaign is sponsored and supported by the *Platform for Communication Rights*, a group of NGOs involved in media and communication projects around the world.

The group is concerned about the issues that arise for civil society and NGOs in the context of the new Information Society and its global governance, such as the right to communicate, the impact on cultural development, equitable access to services and information, balanced global development, as well as media ownership and content.

Platform for Communication Rights believes *«that civil society must play a central role in planning the WSIS from the earliest stages, and not simply during the event itself. Furthermore, we also believe that the best way to ensure that civil society is well represented is to coordinate and cooperate together.»*

For more information, visit:
www.comunica.org/cris/

Update from the UN ICT Task Force

In March 2001, the **United Nations Economic and Social Council** requested the Secretary-General to establish an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force. This initiative is intended to lend a truly global dimension to the multitude of efforts to bridge the global digital divide, foster digital opportunity and thus firmly put ICT at the service of development for all.

The Task Force is an innovative mechanism - it is the first body created by a intergovernmental decision of a United Nations in which **members**, representing governments, civil society (including the private sector, not-for-profit foundations, NGOs and academia) and organizations of the United Nations system have equal decision-making power. The Task Force will be assisted in developing its strategies and policies by a **High-level Panel of Advisers** - a group of distinguished individuals with background and experience in ICT for development and related fields.

The Task Force had its first inaugural meeting on 19-20 November. At its first meeting, the Task Force adopted its **Plan of Action**. It also established six Working Groups. These thematic **Working Groups** are open for participation by non-members of the Task Force. A decision was also made to establish **regional nodes** of the Task Force, initially in **Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean** and for the group of **Arab States**. An inauguration of a regional node for Europe and Central Asia is planned for April 2002. The Task Force had its second meeting on 3-4 February 2002. The meeting considered two principal items on its agenda: National e-strategies for poverty eradication, and the World Summit on Information Society.

The Task Force had an intensive exchange of views on national e-strategies with a particular emphasis on the task of eradicating poverty and achievement of the Millennium Goals. Presentations of national experiences were made by representatives of developing countries and on their respective perspectives and roles by multilateral organizations, donor community and civil society, including foundations and NGOs.

The Task Force welcomed the initiatives in this regard, in particular, the national strategy seminars to be organized in a number of developing countries in the Arab region, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean by the regional networks. To further enhance collaboration, synergy and complementarity of efforts, the Task Force endorsed the proposal that the Chairs of its Regional Networks form an ad hoc coordinating committee (Network of Networks). The Task Force secretariat will facilitate the process of exchange of experiences and inter-regional cooperation. The Regional Network websites will be linked electronically to each other through the Task Force's website. The Task Force Chair will be ex-officio Chair of the Network of Networks.

The meeting addressed the question of the Task Force's contribution to the World Summit for Information Society. Following a presentation by the ITU, the Task Force members noted that the group could help develop a conceptual framework and content issues. The Task Force can also help build regional consensus on key issues through regional networks, as well as play a key role in raising awareness of the Summit. It was noted by participants that the regional networks of the Task Force could contribute to the provision of regional perspectives in the framework of the preparatory process of WSIS.

It was agreed that the third meeting of the Task Force will be held at the UN Headquarters on 30 September - 1 October 2002.

Website for UN ICT Task Force: <http://unicctaskforce.org>

The Websites

The main website of the World Summit on the Information Society <http://www.itu.int/wsis/> has been updated. For consultations with the civil society, the civil society division of the Executive Secretariat has its own website <http://www.geneva2003.org/>. The two sites will be accessible from a new portal site, which will be launched soon.

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