



world summit on the information society

Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005



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Pierre Gagné, Executive Director of the WSIS Executive Secretariat

social development and growth to which all countries aspire. The World Summit on the Information Society provides all stakeholders with a unique and historic opportunity to build consensus and to coordinate their efforts in improving the way governments interact with citizens, the way individuals communicate with one another, and the way businesses do business.

I call upon all stakeholders, from governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society, and particularly those from developing countries, to join us in crafting a shared understanding and vision of the Information Society, and a corresponding Plan of Action aimed at turning the "Digital Divide" into a "Digital Opportunity". I can assure you that the Executive Secretariat of WSIS is up to this formidable challenge, and that we look forward to working with all stakeholders in achieving a successful outcome to the Summit."

Statement by Pierre Gagné – Executive Director of the WSIS Executive Secretariat

"Never before have there been so many players actively involved in contributing to the development and promotion of information and communication technologies (ICTs), that are at the heart of our global information society. Entities from all walks of life increasingly recognize the potential benefits of ICTs in the economic, cultural and

PrepCom-1 at a glance

Venue

The first preparatory meeting of the Summit will be held at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG), 15 rue de Varembé, 1202 Geneva, from 1 to 5 July 2002.

Participants

The delegations of each State participating in PrepCom-1 shall inform the Secretary-General of ITU, by fax (+41 22 730 58 81) or by e-mail (wsis@itu.int), indicating the name and functions of the members of the delegations.

Information about the arrangements for accreditation and participation of relevant private sector organizations/business entities, civil society organizations and media is available at <http://www.itu.int/wsis>.

Registration

Pre-registration is strongly advised in order to avoid long lines on the first day of the meeting. To facilitate delegate registration, it is recommended that delegates planning to attend PrepCom-1 designate a focal point who should send to the Executive Secretariat of WSIS by e-mail (wsis@itu.int) or by fax (+41 22 730 58 81) the list of representatives of their organization and the name of the head of their delegation, where appropriate.

The registration form is available at <http://www.itu.int/wsis>. There is no

registration fee for PrepCom-1. Participants are expected to cover their air fare, hotel and miscellaneous expenses during the conference.

Working hours

Monday to Friday, 1 to 5 July 2002, 1000-1300 and 1500-1800 hours.

Documentation

The meeting documents will be available to all participants at <http://www.itu.int/wsis>

from the first week of June 2002 onwards.

Seating

Seating will follow UN protocol. Each Member State will have two seats at table and two seats behind in the plenary hall of the Conference. Observers will have one seat each. Additional free seating will be available in the back of the hall.

Interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation will be available in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese in the plenary meetings and in the meetings of the Sub-Committees. No other interpretation facilities will be available.

Further information about the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-1) of the WSIS is available at <http://www.itu.int/wsis>.

WSIS Africa Regional Conference, Bamako, Mali, 25 to 30 May 2002



Bamako (Mali), 25 to 30 May 2002, WSIS Africa Regional Conference

Africa moves to bridge the digital divide

Some 2000 participants from 51 African countries met in Bamako to kick off Africa's preparations for the Summit. Africa made two major innovations by seizing the opportunity to organize the first regional conference preparatory to the Summit. First, it brought together

representatives of governments, private enterprise and civil society and, second, it created the conditions for genuine dialogue on an equal footing. On both counts the Conference launched a new type of partnership that participants agreed made the Bamako formula a resounding success.

Results: the Bamako Conference adopted a Final Declaration that lays the groundwork for Africa's vision of its place in the Information Society. Africa gives high priority to the creation of local content and to the shared benefits of the new opportunities in information technologies. For information on the Conference and the Final Declaration, see the **Civil Society Platform** at: <http://www.itu.int/wsis> and <http://www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002>



Bamako (Mali), 25 to 30 May 2002, WSIS Africa Regional Conference



Bamako (Mali), 25 to 30 May 2002, WSIS Africa Regional Conference

Summit themes and outcomes: a first draft document for discussion at PrepCom-1

The scope of the World Summit on the Information Society is described in UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 (21 December, 2001). It defines the purpose of the Summit as to develop a "common vision and understanding of the information society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society".

In line with the UNGA Resolution, a series of Preparatory Committee meet-

ings (PrepComs) will set the agenda of the Summit. The first PrepCom will be held on 1-5 July in Geneva. A draft document on "Proposed Themes for the Summit and Possible Outcomes" has been prepared by the Executive Secretariat for discussion at that meeting. While there are many issues associated with the dawning of the information society, the themes to be covered by the Summit can be grouped into three main concerns, drawn from the UNGA Resolution:

1. To develop a common vision and understanding of the information society

We live in an Information Society and access to information lies at the heart of most human activity. Skills in information-handling are required in many jobs in modern societies and access to information is seen as a route to economic development. Trillions USD worth of financial transactions are transferred around the world each day, in digital 1s and 0s.

But the sheer quantity of information available should not mask the fact that access to information, and the means to use it, are unequally shared. Information poverty is a fact of life for many of the world's citizens. The fear is that, as more and more of human activity becomes directly dependent on access to information, inequalities in access will make other development gaps more difficult to bridge.

2. To promote the urgently needed access of all the world's inhabitants to information, knowledge and communication technologies for development

There are more televisions in Brazil, more fixed line telephones in Italy, more

mobile phones in Korea, and greater Internet connectivity in Luxembourg than in the whole continent of Africa.

In recent years, disparities in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) has come to be known as the "Digital Divide". The Summit will provide an opportunity to evaluate those success stories that have allowed an increasing number of developing countries to develop world-class ICT networks and services. For many, the route to success has involved a combination of private sector participation, market liberalization and the creation of independent regulatory agencies.

3. To harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration

The UN Millennium Summit, in 2000, defined a set of goals to be achieved for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. That Declaration contains a commitment to "ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies [...] are available to all". While access to ICTs can educate, entertain and enrich our lives, ICTs, together with other tools, can also play a part in helping to achieve the much broader goals of the Millennium Declaration.

It is important that the process for elaborating the themes be as open and transparent as possible. For that reason, **comments on the proposed themes and additional inputs** to be posted on the WSIS website are requested from all stakeholders in the process. They can be sent to the WSIS Executive Secretariat using the e-mail address: inputs-wsis@itu.int

The role of Switzerland as the host country for the first phase of WSIS: Interview with Ambassador Daniel Stauffacher

Daniel Stauffacher is Ambassador, Delegate of the Swiss Federal Council to the World Summit on the Information Society. He heads the Swiss Secretariat for the Summit.

Ambassador Stauffacher, please tell us what the role of Switzerland is as host of the World Summit on the Information Society?

As you know, the Swiss Government and Geneva are proud to be the host of the first phase of this very important first Summit of the United Nations of the 21st century, along with Tunisia, the host of the second phase, and to support Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi in this great endeavour.

What are Switzerland's goals for the Summit?

For Switzerland, it is important that the Summit helps to create a World Information Society that enables all segments of society, in developed and

developing countries, to access and to provide information through ICTs. Countries should be able to use the technology to better develop their societies in the fields of government, health, education, business, research, as well as culture.

However, governments cannot do this job alone. Business, which has been the driving force for development of ICTs as we know them today, and civil society, a prime user of ICTs for developmental applications, must be important partners in helping defining the outcome of the Summit. These sectors will be the prime motors behind implementing the actions which will have been foreseen by the Summit, working together with governments. The Summit will be of a political nature, and we need to have the participation of governments at the highest political level. The CEOs of private sector companies and the leaders of civil society



Daniel Stauffacher, Ambassador, Switzerland

must also be there to contribute and hopefully make the necessary commitments to achieve the goals of the Summit.

Why specifically is the Summit important for Switzerland?

For Switzerland, and for Geneva, the Summit is of utmost importance because of its content, but it will also be the first event that will take place here since Switzerland joined the United Nations.

We also believe that the "International Geneva", in particular, the impor-

tant diplomatic community and the many important and relevant international organizations based here, as well as the large experience of the Canton and the City of Geneva in hosting important events, will make an important contribution to the Summit. We also hope that through this process the role of ITU and that of other international organizations here in Geneva will be strengthened and that their synergies will be fully realized.

What actions has Switzerland already undertaken to prepare for the Summit?

Mr Utsumi, the Secretary-General of ITU, has asked myself and Ambassador Ben Salem of Tunisia to help jointly organize a series of expert meetings and of consultations with the Ambassadors and Missions in Geneva. The goal is to mobilize and assist governments in preparation of the PrepCom process, to identify possible themes of the Summit, as well as to draft the constitution of

the first PrepCom and the Summit to be held in July 2002, along with the formation of a provisional PrepCom Bureau.

What is Switzerland's role in the financing of the Summit?

The financial contribution of the Federal Government and the Canton of Geneva for the WSIS process is in the order of 15 million CHF. The Swiss Confederation and the Geneva Government are jointly financing approximately ten experts from various countries, working in the Executive Secretariat of the Summit under the responsibility of the Executive Director. We are also providing financing for the participation of representatives of LDCs.

What is the role of the Swiss Executive Secretariat for the Summit?

In addition, Switzerland has created a Host Government Secretariat with, as of today, six staff members and an experienced Conference Management Company attached to it. The Swiss Executive Secretariat is working closely

with Executive Director Pierre Gagné and his team at the WSIS Executive Secretariat, ITU, as well as with our colleagues from Tunisia, on organizational aspects of the Summit preparations.

Mr Ambassador, why is it you were chosen to lead the Swiss Government's team for the Summit?

I had the privilege to represent my Government in the same capacity when we hosted the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the Social Summit +5 Process in Geneva in June 2000 (Geneva 2000). It was thought that it would be practical to bring my direct experience and the lessons learned from that event to WSIS. That's why my boss, Marc Furrer, Director General of OFCOM, asked me to join him and the Swiss Government team in hosting the Summit.

Website of the Swiss Executive Secretariat: www.wsisgeneva2003.org (available: August 2002)

Message from Ambassador Mohamed Hatem Ben Salem, Tunisia Mission, Geneva

"The organization of the World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which is to be held in Geneva in 2003, and the second phase in Tunis in 2005, reflects the wish of the international community to work towards an environment that is conducive to broader access to the new information and communication technologies.

The fact is that the rapid and far-reaching changes that currently characterize the communications sector have resulted in the marginalization of significant sections of society in several countries and regions of the world, in some cases independently of the level of development.

Thus, while the achievement of equitable access to the new information and communication technologies represents an ideal for humankind, we are spurred on by reality to engage in a

sustained effort, with the participation of all concerned in a spirit of solidarity, to reduce what has come to be known as the digital divide. The task at hand is an immeasurably vast one, but our will to succeed must be commensurate with this challenge, to which we have no option but to respond.

To this end, Tunisia has, since the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 of the resolution on the Summit, been working continuously to ensure the national and international mobilization that has to occur if this major event is to be a success.

It is therefore in close cooperation and consultation with Switzerland that Tunisia is co-piloting the informal consultation process that has been initiated with a view to seek the contribution of all Member States and all other concerned parties, in a spirit of transparency and mutual trust.



Mohamed Hatem Ben Salem,
Ambassador, Tunisia

The immediate objective is to come relatively prepared to the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee in July, where the task will be to finalize the organizational arrangements, make a start on identifying the themes for the Summit and engage in a preliminary exchange of views regarding the substance."

Information Session for the Permanent Missions in Geneva

On April 30th, the two host countries, Switzerland and Tunisia, organized an informal information session to provide the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva with an overview of the many issues related to the Information Society. This information session, which took place at the ITU premises, brought together some one hundred diplomats from both the industrialized and developing countries. The presentation was conducted by independent experts who described and explained in a very comprehensive and lively way some of the challenges that the Information Society must address.

The first speaker, **Paul SAFFO**, Director of the Institute for the Future based in Silicon Valley, California, spoke on the Information Society and the next revolution. While we struggle to make sense of the Information Society and the technologies underlying it, they are morphing into something new. A new order is emerging from the rubble of the dot.com bubble, and it is going to deliver on some old information revolution promises in profound and unexpected ways. The result will be a myriad of new opportunities and challenges for business, policymakers and global society in the decade ahead. Nowhere will the challenges or opportunities be greater than in those areas of global society which have not yet been reached by the revolution. Policy decisions made in the next five years are likely to shape the global information order for the next two decades.

Emmanuel N. OLEKAMBAINI, from Tanzania, Coordinator for Policy and Regulations with the African Connection Program, mused about coming after a Silicon Valley presentation in which the developing countries don't



Left to right: **Elmar Brok**, Bertelsmann AG; **Emmanuel N. Olekambaini**, African Connection Program; **V. Ranjit Khosla**, Excelsior Ventures Management LLC; **Paul Saffo**, Institute for the Future

figure at all in the statistics. He presented an overview of the key issues the developing world has to face in terms of infrastructure and connectivity, access to content, policies and regulations. He insisted on institutional and human partnership and stressed that there is no point in having appliances and facilities if they are unaffordable, or inappropriate, for the local population.

V. Ranjit KHOSLA, as President of Excelsior Ventures Management LLC, USA, and Board Member of TARahaat.com, India, has experience on both sides of the digital divide. In his opinion, the digital revolution presents unique opportunities to invent new situations and enterprises. He presented the TARahaat.com project, an "electronic" road that connects Indian villages to the rest of the world. It is designed to be so simple that even a small child or an illiterate person can quickly learn to use it and to get all the benefits it offers. The inspiration comes from Mahatma Gandhi who spent his whole life looking for ways to improve the lives of villagers in India.

During the panel discussion which followed the three presentations, **Elmar BROK**, Senior Vice-President, Media Development, Bertelsmann AG in Germany, picked up a question on content, stating that issues are frequently discussed from a technologi-

cal point of view, but content is rarely addressed: "Content is the result of human creativity and entertainment". The new information technologies know no borders, content is no longer controllable. While we have different national constitutional boundaries, there is no legitimate body at the world level to legislate on these matters.

Marc FURRER, Director-General of the Swiss Federal Office for Communication, closed the four-hour session thanking all participants. He stressed that access and content are clearly the key issues to be debated by the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society through a constructive dialogue between the governments, the private sector and civil society.

Websites:

- Institute for the Future: www.iftf.org
- African Connection Program: www.africanconnection.org
- TARahaat.com/tara
- Bertelsmann SA: www.bertelsmann.com/index.cfm
- Swiss Federal Office for Communication: www.ofcom.ch; www.isps.ch

The multi-stakeholder approach of the DOT Force – a view from an NGO/NPO (Not-for-Profit Organization) participant

"I think the DOT Force experience is extremely valuable for the WSIS process," said Izumi Aizu, Principal of Asia Network Research (ANR) and participant at the DOT Force meeting in Calgary, May 5-7, 2002. "At first, people were a little sceptical about the multi-stakeholder approach (government + private sector + NGOs) and the ability of representatives from developing countries and international organizations to work together."

"In essence, they spoke different languages and it was difficult to figure out exactly what they meant, hence it was difficult to understand each other. However, as we discussed the issues and drafted the action plans through several challenging rounds of collaboration, it became clear that this new and unique approach (at least in the G8 context) was proving valuable and productive. In fact, this multi-stakeholder approach was the reason we were able to produce quality recommendations from what was really a small, lightly-resourced and hurried process."

According to Mr Aizu, there was strong agreement among all DOT Force members that one of the real successes of the process, and a pleasant surprise, was that all parties worked as part of a team. "NGOs were able to participate as equals and brought a diverse set of views, skills and experiences. In particular they were looked to for their knowledge of the Internet and use of ICTs. NGOs seemed to have been able to consult more widely among their peers in their own countries and regions, as well as in the developing countries, than other stakeholders. This diversity and breadth of knowledge was valuable in forming the DOT Force report and in identifying action areas. The importance of the non-governmental role in the DOT Force



Izumi Aizu, Principal,
Asia Network Research Inc.

process was also clearly illustrated in the way NGOs were asked to take the lead in chairing or co-chairing many of the implementation actions over the past year."

For Izumi Aizu, the multi-stakeholder approach was also one of the most important outcomes of the DOT Force process, a fact that was confirmed at the Calgary meeting. "At Calgary, the consensus was made to maintain and develop, if possible, the momentum of this team spirit and synergy into implementing future ICT projects. It was also agreed that the implementation teams continue to network amongst each other, an activity that can work with the UN ICT Task Force as well as with WSIS."

Izumi Aizu

- Principal, Asia Network Research Inc. (<http://www.anr.org/>)
- Executive Research Fellow, GLOCOM, International University of Japan (www.glocom.ac.jp)
- Researcher Director, Institute for Hyper Network Society
- Member of Advisory Board, Aspen Institute's Internet Policy Project

News from the G8 DOT Force

DOT Force members met on 5 to 7 May in Calgary, Canada, to finalize their report on the implementation of their Action Plan. The Action Plan was endorsed by the G8 leaders at the 2001 Summit in Genoa, Italy. The DOT Force is made up of developing countries, G8 governments, international organizations, and the private and not-for-profit sectors. The members work together to develop ways and means to assist the developing world in enhancing their social and economic goals through the deployment of information networks and technologies.

The DOT Force initiatives also target the specific needs expressed by African leaders through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), particularly in such areas as: support for the development of national e-strategies; improvements in access and connectivity; and promoting entrepreneurs and enterprise in developing economies.

Canada, as G8 Chair, will provide a report card to the G8 leaders in Kananaskis in June detailing the progress made in the implementation of the DOT Force action plan.

Although the DOT Force will formally conclude its work with the report to G8 leaders in Kananaskis, various stakeholders will continue to develop and implement individual projects and initiatives in the months ahead.

“Global” support by women for communication technology

Women have expressed overwhelming support for the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). A survey by the International Telecommunication Union of women from all regions of the world shows striking solidarity in the belief that ICTs are critical to women for meeting their personal and professional goals, in overcoming the inequality of the "Digital Divide" and as entrepreneurs.

Overcoming the “Digital Divide” – literacy and availability are key

Women were asked to rank the most important issues that needed to be overcome in order to bridge the “Digital Divide”. The most important factor was identified as *Availability of ICTs* followed by the need to improve *Literacy levels*. This was consistent regardless of region, with the exception of North America where increasing *Awareness of the potential of ICTs for women* was judged as most important. Improving *Literacy levels* fell to third spot after ICT availability. (See Figure 1.)

It is significant to note the relatively low ranking by all regions of *Access costs*, *Language* or *Time availability* as perceived obstacles to overcoming the *Digital Divide*. Given the need to *multi-task*, especially by women, who increasingly have to balance professional and family commitments, it could be expected that *Time availability* for ICTs would in fact be a more significant concern.

Contribute to the Summit

The work of the Executive Secretariat of WSIS 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 contributions and gifts in kind

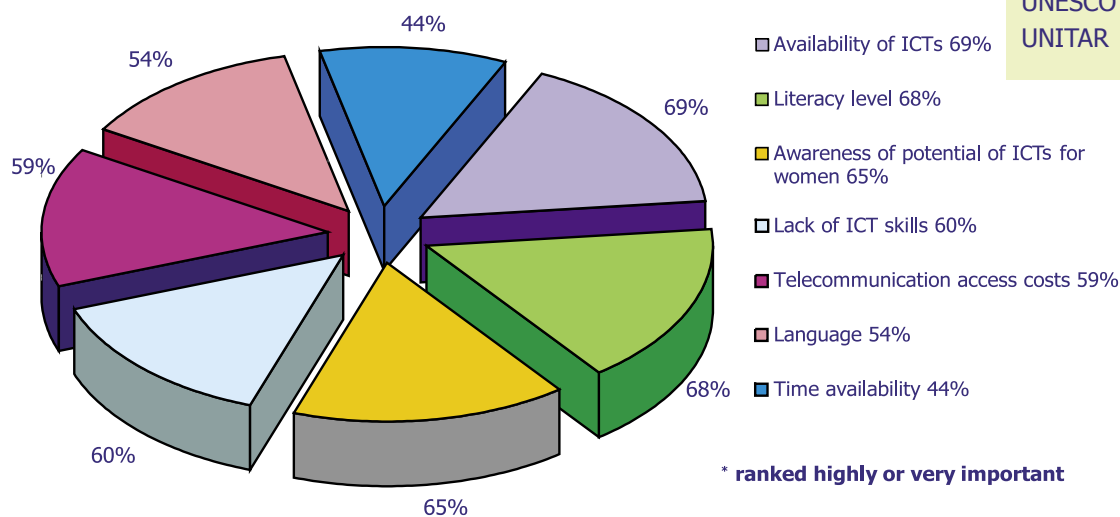
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UNESCO
UNITAR

Figure 1

Which issues are most important for women to overcome the "Digital Divide"?*



Women in the private sector, government or non-government – Still all for one

The solidarity of opinion amongst women as to the importance of ICTs held true even when the responses were divided amongst those who classified themselves as primarily employed in the private, government or non-governmental sectors.

Improved information sources and the *Opportunity to learn through shared experiences* were ranked as the

top two reasons why ICTs are important to women entrepreneurs.

As for the importance of the role of ICTs in helping women to meet their professional goals, *Increased efficiency in the workplace* and *Improved information sharing* again ranked at the top.

There was a divergence in opinion when asked which issues were the most

important for women in order to overcome the *Digital Divide*. Those in the government and private sector agreed that the need to improve *Literacy levels* was the most important factor, while those from the non-government sector ranked *Availability of ICTs* as the most critical issue.



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The WSIS logo: Information and the human touch

Inspired by the global circulation of information, technology and its social significance, a logo has been created for the World Summit on the Information Society. The logo was developed in cooperation with award-winning graphic designer Johann Terrazz of [Twice2 Design Studio](#), the WSIS Executive Secretariat, the host countries and ITU.

The design idea of the logo is based on the notion of the "circulation of information" and reflects the titles of the Summit.

The shape of the logo has several interpretations:

- The letter "i" for information, a word which translates into many languages.
- The global shape and symbol of five continents.
- The circular flow of "i"nformation.
- The shape of the letter "i" is like a person, which represents the human touch and how the information society includes everyone.

• The communication between people.

• The values zero and one (0/1) and their correspondence to the two digits used by the binary number system, the language of computers.

• Vibrant, warm colours reflect the contemporary and positive identity of a global information society for the 21st century.

The websites

The main website of the World Summit on the Information Society <http://www.itu.int/ws> has been up-dated and redesigned.

Civil Society: Its principles, priorities and visions Summary of the contributions received by the WSIS Secretariat's Civil Society Division

– **Principles:** Civil society has a fundamental role to play in establishing an information society that respects the right to communicate, promotes cultural diversity, gender equality, and ensures freedom of expression and democratic and transparent governance.

– **Priorities:** The digital divide is the expression of deep socio-economic inequalities. Information technologies must serve social and development objectives (health, education, socio-economic justice) with the support of traditional media. It is urgent that solutions be found for the least developed

countries, especially women, the handicapped, linguistic minorities, etc.

– **Vision and role of the players:** The notion of public domain or "global commons" has to be redefined and enlarged. Creating a new information society requires redefining the roles of the principal players (government-private sector-civil society) in order to focus the emerging media on human needs.

Send your contributions and comments to the **Civil Society Platform/Internet forum** at: <http://www.itu.int/ws>.

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