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<u>Partner Organizations</u>:

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN
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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
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FOR WESTERN ASIA**

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES
TASK FORCE**

DRAFT INFORMATION NOTICE No. 3

Building Regional Partnerships for the Information Society:
Regional Perspectives and Global Dimensions

(Tunis, 16 November 2005, from 13-17.00 hrs in Conference Room Le Kram)

during the
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

TUNIS, 16-18 November 2005

The event will take place in two High-Level Round Tables featuring Heads of State, Government Ministers, the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Regional Commissions, as well as high-level representatives of the business community and civil society

I.   RATIONALE

1.   The first phase of the WSIS held in Geneva from 10-12 of December 2003 came up with a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action on building an inclusive information society. The common vision was that of "a common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge that enables individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

2.   On regional initiatives, the Declaration of principles states: "Regional integration contributes to the development of the global Information Society and makes strong cooperation within and among regions indispensable. Regional dialogue should contribute to national capacity building and to the alignment of national strategies with the goals of this Declaration of Principles in a compatible way, while respecting national and regional particularities. In this context, we welcome and encourage the international community to support the ICT-related measures of such initiatives".

3.   In the Declaration was also a quest that the information society should be an inclusive society in that everyone should benefit from the opportunities that ICT's can offer. The Declaration committed all to move towards an information society for all based on shared knowledge by strengthening cooperation to seek common responses to the challenges and to the implementation of the Plan of Action, which would realize the vision of an inclusive Information Society based on the Key Principles incorporated in the Declaration.

4.   The international development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration, set by world leaders, are intended to catalyze economic and social development that would halve the number of the world's poorest citizens by 2015. The strategic, intensive, widespread and innovative use of technologies in development policies and programs are an important way of helping to realize the ambitious agenda of the Millennium Declaration. Without such laser-like focus and vision, scalable implementation in many instances may well be impossible. Report of the Secretary-General "In Larger Freedom: Toward Development, Security and Human Rights for All" and the reports of the Millennium Project and the Commission on the Private Sector and Development have highlighted the synergies and inter-linkages between innovation and investment in development.

II.   OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

5.   The objective of the event is to share experience and discuss how the goals of sustainable and inclusive development in the various continents can be supported by innovative technologies, and also inclusion of women, who should be an integral part and key actors in the Information Society. The results and conclusions of these discussions will be delivered to the WSIS. To that end, debate-leading personalities, such as Heads of State or Government, Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions, the Coordinator of the UN ICT Task Force and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will be involved.

6. The discussions are expected to provide information about ongoing implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action. Among other efforts, concrete Regional Action Plans for the Information Society have been approved and are being implemented. The discussion will specifically focus on indications of the work ahead and possible forms of cooperation among stakeholders, especially opportunities and likely modalities for inter-regional cooperation including knowledge exchange.

7. The experiences and perspectives of each region represented will be reviewed with special attention to current issues and expected future trends involving women in economic activity focusing on the experience of Europe and the Middle East.

III. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

8. Putting in place the Information Society often requires cooperation among countries and the international community, in the form of expertise in formulating programmes and projects as well as in financing. In this regard, the international community, especially the United Nations agencies have a fundamental role in the implementation and coordination of the Geneva and Tunis decisions. Another important role of the international community is support for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Considering that ICT is a vital factor in the achievement of these goals, it is very important to closely monitor the impact of initiatives supported by the UN and other international organizations in the use of ICT to achieve the MDGs and to widely spread lessons learned and best practices.

IV. THEMES AND STRUCTURE

9. The event will consist of two High Level Round Tables as follows:

    - First High Level Round Table on "Regional Perspectives for the Global Information Society" to be held in the afternoon of 16 November 2005 from 13H00 to 15H00.

    - Second High Level Round Table on "Women in the Information Society: Building a Gender Balanced Knowledge-based Economy", to be held in the afternoon of 16 November 2005 from 15:00 to 17:00 hours.

10. Each Round Table will be chaired by a Head of State or Government and moderated by a leading Business Executive or a Civil Society Activist, who will each make a 7 minute introductory remark.

11. In order to have interactive discussions and full participation of the audience, each panellist will make a presentation of not more than 10 minutes.

12. At the end of presentations from panellists of each Round Table, 50 minutes will be reserved for contributions from the floor and a session of Questions and Answers.

13. Each Round Table will have a Rapporteur from the relevant coordinating Regional Commissions (UNECA and UNESCWA). The role of Chairs, moderators, panellists and rapporteurs is in annex.

14. The first Round Table will feature the Executive Secretaries of ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP who will make presentations followed by interventions from a Government Minister and a Civil Society Activist.

15. The second Round Table will feature the Executive Secretaries of ECE and ESCWA who will make presentations followed by interventions from a Government Minister, a leading Business Executive and a Civil Society Activist.

16. The provisional agenda is included in this Information Notice with names of confirmed Chairpersons, moderators and panelists. ECE and UNCTAD are urged to identify and provide names of the two remaining panelists.

17. Each Round Table has one contact address included at the top of the provisional agenda.

18. The Round Tables are expected to be conducted in several languages, at least in English, French and Spanish, depending on the availability of resources. The Regional Commissions are urged to provide resources for hiring of interpreters and interpretation equipment.

V. ORGANIZERS

19. The event is being organized jointly by the United Nations Regional Commissions (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT Task Force).

20. This event is a continuation of the fruitful cooperation between the above institutions throughout the WSIS process, including organization of four panel discussions on "National Strategies for the Information Society and the Role of Regional and Global Organizations" held on 10-11 December 2003 in Geneva.

VI. PARTICIPATION AND ACCREDITATION

21. Representatives of all Member States of the United Nations and interested intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations accredited with the World Summit on the Information Society are welcome to participate. All participants are required to have valid passports and, if necessary, visas. Applications for visas should be made as soon as possible to the Embassy of Tunisia in the country in which the participants reside.

22. All those who wish to participate should register with the World Summit for the Information Society at the following internet address:
http://www.itu.int/wsis/participation/accreditation/index.html

VII.   DOCUMENTATION

23. All documents for the event will be made available only on the website of the UNECA at the following address: http://www.uneca.org/aisi/wsis2005

24. Participants are encouraged to download the papers from the website and bring their own copies with them. **Documents will not be distributed in the conference room.**

VIII. FURTHER INFORMATION

25. Should you wish to have more detailed information, please contact:

Mr. Ali Todaro
Secretary to The Commission
Office of the Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
Tel: 251 11 5514898
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Email: atodaro@uneca.org
or
Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah
Officer-in-charge
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Fax: 251 11 510512
Tel : 251 11 513612
Email: aopoku-mensah@uneca.org

IX.   HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLES

DAY 1: 16 NOVEMBER 2005, 13.00 – 15.00 hrs

Panel 1:   Regional Perspectives for the Global Information Society (2 hours)

26. The information revolution has been a major driver of economic change, restructuring businesses, affecting skills and employment, contributing to growth, and facilitating the opening up of markets through the wider and faster flow of information and knowledge.

27. Global and regional forces have had significant impacts on the emergence of the Information Society. Regional cooperation is regarded as an important component of an international strategy for promoting sustainable development as an instrument for promoting the integration between countries and attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Increasing attention is being given to issues of globalization and the cross-border nature of many development challenges, through the pursuit of regional initiatives and integration. Consequently, a regional Information Society strategy can help build a better knowledge environment, increase dialogue at the highest political levels, build political consensus and

create a common vision for digital opportunities for countries. In addition, it lays the required foundation for promoting greater cooperation among countries and accelerating integration of countries into the global economy.

28. The new forces for economic growth worldwide are technological innovation and entrepreneurship. It is generally recognized that the private sector is an effective booster for harnessing these forces, in order to create wealth, generate employment and promote social well being. In turn, entrepreneurial, knowledge-based, small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the private sector as they help diversify the economy and offer a wide range of goods and services both to national and international markets. Most countries have formulated strategies for promoting innovation and assisting small enterprises in acquiring modern technological resources. Nevertheless, challenges still remain with respect to strategies at the regional level. Infrastructure, legal and regulatory policies, limited human capacity, cultural and linguistic factors as well as limited political will include some of the difficulties.

29. The purpose of this session is to share information with each of the regions represented, showing how the goals of sustainable, inclusive development in the regions can be supported by innovative technologies. Success stories will be showcased and panellists will consider future trends and how to promote the sharing of best practices across regions.

Contact: Makane Faye, Senior Regional Advisor, UNECA
             Email: mfaye@uneca.org

Provisional agenda

Chairperson: H.E. Paul Kagame, President, Republic of the Republic of Rwanda

Moderator: Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Member of the UN ICT Task Force

Panelists: Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

             Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

             Mr. José Luis Machinea, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)

             Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

             Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Director, Information Network for the Third Sector-RITS

16 NOVEMBER 2005, 15.00 – 17:00 hrs

Panel 2:   Women in the Information Society: Building a Gender Balanced Knowledge-based Economy (2 hours)

30. Women are taking less advantage of the process of building the Information Society and benefit less than men from this process. This is reflected in lower numbers of women as ICT users, producers and policy makers. Structural inequalities and the existence of gender-specific resource constraints, including income, time, educational bias and cultural factors appear to be responsible for this situation. In particular, family responsibilities and lower incomes leave women with less time and disposable income to access information technologies in particular outside their houses. Women and girls on average receive less education and training, especially in developing countries, and therefore may lack the language and other skills required for engaging in activities leading to the creation of the Information Society. Finally, young women may have less access to ICT, through public sites, especially when they are located in Internet cafés, either because going to such places alone may be socially inappropriate in some cultures or because the cafés are placed in areas where women may feel concerned about their personal safety.

31. Policy makers will have to address numerous challenges in building the Information Society, including adequate supply of human, financial and institutional resources. The gender dimension should, however, be part of this process from its very outset. Policy makers have to recognize the need to build an inclusive Information Society, promoting the full and active participation of women and men in this process from all walks of socioeconomic life. Only then will building awareness, encouraging participation by all stakeholders and developing relevant ICT policies bring results. It is only through full and balanced participation in ICT capacity building that an equitable Information Society will emerge, ensuring equal opportunities and equal rights for both men and women at home and in the workplace.

32. The Declaration of Principles endorsed at the first phase of WSIS reaffirmed the enormous opportunities for women provided by recent developments in ICT and acknowledged the need to close the gender digital divide.   The Declaration also underlined the role of women as equal partners to men, in crafting the future Information Society. Full commitment to and implementation of these principles is necessary to ensure that ICT empowers women and leads to their full participation in the development process.

33. The Round Table on "Women in the Information Society: Building a Gender Balanced Knowledge-Based Economy" will address lessons learned and experiences gained by each region in their gender mainstreaming efforts. The economic and social changes resulting from women being given equal opportunities for participation, ownership, control and consumption of information will be given specific emphasis. As a result of this discussion, main directions for further actions will be presented.

Contact: Mr. Omar Bizri, Director, Information and Communication Technology Division, UNESCWA
            Email: bizri@un.org

Ms. Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point, Office of the Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
E-mail: ewa.zimny@unece.org

Provisional agenda

C-Chairpersons:

H. E. Dr. Leonel Fernández, President of the Dominican Republic

H. E. Ms. Nadia Alsaeed, Representative of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, and Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Moderator: Ms. Cynthia Romero Mamon, President and Managing Director of Sun Microsystems Philippines, Inc.

Panelists: Ms. Mervat M. Tallawy, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)

Mr. Paolo Garonna, Officer-in-Charge, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Ms. Fatima Seye Sylla, Chairperson of Bokk Jang Bokk Jeff and Director of Digital Freedom Initiative, Senegal

Professor Natasa Gospic, Professor at the University of Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, Chairperson of ITU Working Group on Gender Issues, and Board Member of Community of Yugoslav PTT

Ms. Barbara Barrett, corporate boards of Raytheon and Exponent, Inc., and former President and CEO of the American Management Association

Annex

Organization of Sessions

General principles

- An ECA staff will be designated as the session rapporteur for Round Table 1
- UNESCWA and UNECE staff will be designated as the session rapporteurs for Round Table 2
- Every session has a chairperson and a moderator
- Every session program includes paper presentations by Panelists and final discussion by participants.
- The Chairperson will make an opening address of around 7 minutes
- The Moderator will make a statement of not more than 7 minutes
- Presenters are allowed 10 minutes each
- 50 minutes will be reserved for questions and answers
- To broaden the spectrum of discussion on key issues, questions are allowed during discussion time at the end of all presentations

Role of session Officials

Role of the Chair

The chair presides over the sessions and sees to it that the sessions follow the programme. Specifically, the Chair:

- Welcomes members and introduces guests;

- Introduces the session topic and objectives;

- Introduces the programme presenters, including the moderator, Panellists and Rapporteur;

- Gives a conclusion at the end of the discussion period; and

- Closes the session on time. It is essential not to overrun the allotted time because the room must be set up for the next session.

Role of the Moderator

Prior to the meeting:
- She/He is invited to read the papers of the session prior to the workshop venue

During the meeting:
- Points out any 'participation guidelines' or specific interaction requirements
- Introduces the topic for discussion
- Gives the floor to Panelists

- Acknowledges participants who wish to contribute to discussions on presentations and decides on the order and length of the interventions
- Encourages inactive participants to join in, and refocuses the discussion if particular contributors tend to dominate or if re-focusing is required for other reasons
- Ensures that the same participants do not monopolise the discussions and that interventions are relevant to the topic under discussion by interrupting when an intervention strays from the topic
- Ensures that each presenter keeps to allotted time, and if necessary interrupts the presenter to advise her/him of time remaining, and stops her/him when time is up
- Summarizes the debate and prepares a 10 lines summary of the session for their inclusion in the proceedings

Role of Session Panellists

The Panellists are expected to:

- Make a 10-minute oral presentation, using PowerPoint, on the assigned topic; and

- Answer questions from the floor and from the high table

- Participate in discussions at the end of all presentations

- Prepare a 10 lines summary of their presentation to be handed over to the rapporteur

Role of the Rapporteurs

The Rapporteurs have a key role to play in producing a suitable report for the Round Tables. They will therefore be advised to keep in mind the overall objectives of the Round Tables.

Specifically, the Rapporteurs will:

- Take full narrative notes, not just bullet points in recording the sessions
- Collect the Chairpersons' opening remarks, the introduction statements of the Moderators and all power point presentations and full presentations on electronic format or paper of the panellists
- Take notes on any statement made, and any other ad hoc contributions that arise during sessions
- Identify actions and recommendations to be taken
- Compile and word-process these notes
- Submit the reports to the relevant focal persons coordinating the Round Tables, who will circulate them to organizers and publish them in the event website: http://www.uneca.org/aisi/wsis2005