

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY BRUNA FAIDUTTI DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS (WFUNA)

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies...
Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) and in particular its Task Force directed by the United Nations Association of Denmark with the participation of the United Nations Associations of China, Ecuador, Mozambique, Pakistan, Uganda and Venezuela, has followed closely the developments of the WSIS, its different phases of discussions and negotiations, which have culminated today at this meeting in Tunis. We are now at the beginning of the implementation phase.

Information Society and Human Rights have a close link. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”. This clear and simple statement finds its limitations when confronted with the implementation of standards to protect human rights at the national, regional and universal level.

Information and Communication Technology must be seen as a tool for promoting and protecting the basic rights of the individuals. If the Summit was to be credible the principles of human rights as well as those of the rule of law in international and national affairs had to be reaffirmed. We salute the Tunis Commitment in this area. This commitment must be central in the implementation phase.

If we look at concrete areas where Information and Communication Technology is to serve human rights issues, we would mention the development of public policies that safeguard and protect the privacy and freedom of expression of all human beings; the establishment of legal standards to protect human rights, especially those of consumers at international, regional and local levels; the establishment of international, national and local measures that ensure that the right to an open and transparent voting process is guaranteed and that the privacy of the vote is fully and completely protected if and when electronic voting technologies are implemented.

In the area of education, the Internet Revolution has opened numerous new opportunities and access to the most disadvantaged classes, especially the rural poor. But technology is only a tool. Eradication of illiteracy and poverty as stated in the Millennium Development Goals must not only be a target but a commitment of the international community and here technology has a role to play.

The Tunis Commitment recognises “that the freedom of expression and the free flow of information, ideas, and knowledge, are essential for the information society and beneficial to development”. Perhaps this commitment finds its source in the phrase of Voltaire, who said:

‘Je ne suis pas d'accord avec ce que vous dites mais je me battraï pour que vous puissiez le dire.’
Thank you.