

Moving the Agenda Forward at the World Summit on the Information Society

From 10-12 December, Phase I of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in Geneva, bringing together around 12,000 participants from 176 countries—including 54 Heads of State and Government, 83 ministers and vice-ministers, representatives of governments, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, the private sector, including industry leaders, and the media. During the Summit, governments adopted a Declaration of Principles and committed to a Plan of Action that sets out a global framework with targets and benchmarks so that all countries can benefit from the information society—a society characterized by a high level of information intensity underpinning a large range of personal, social, educational and business activities, and by the ability to transmit, receive and exchange digital data rapidly between places irrespective of distance. The three-day Summit was the first multi-stakeholder global effort to share and to shape the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for creating a better world.

BACKGROUND

New information and communication technologies have opened up opportunities worldwide for large numbers of people; however, an even larger majority of people do not have access to these new tools. Disparities between countries that do and those that do not have access are increasing. The idea of holding a world summit to address this and other issues related to the information society began as an initiative of the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and was subsequently endorsed by UN General Assembly resolution 56/183, adopted in December 2001.

Resolution 56/183 identified ITU to take the lead role in Summit preparations, and encouraged the active participation of all relevant UN bodies, other international and regional organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector during the intergovernmental preparatory process that started on 2 July 2002, and at the Summit itself. Phase I of WSIS comprised three Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepComs), an intersessional meeting, two resumed sessions of PrepCom3, and five regional preparatory

conferences, all of which sought to build and negotiate the draft Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted at the December Summit. Phase II of WSIS (to be held in Tunisia in November 2005) will assess progress and adopt any further measures agreed by governments. Development themes will be a key focus of the second phase of the Summit.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND PLAN OF ACTION

On 12 December, governments adopted the Declaration of Principles, entitled “Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium,” in which they committed to building a “people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone could create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling 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 UN and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” as stated in the first paragraph of the Declaration.

The Declaration of Principles includes the following 11 key elements, identified and agreed upon during the intergovernmental negotiations:

- 1 The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development;
- 2 Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society;
- 3 Access to information and knowledge;
- 4 Capacity building;
- 5 Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs;
- 6 Enabling environment;
- 7 ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life;
- 8 Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content;
- 9 Media;
- 10 Ethical dimension of the Information Society; and
- 11 International and regional cooperation

The Declaration of Principles also affirms that ICTs can provide a wide range of opportunities for women—who should be an integral part of, and key actors in, the information society—and that a gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed and ICTs used as a tool to achieve that end. The Declaration also underscores the connection between ICTs and the achievement of development goals to reduce poverty and hunger, improve education and health care, and achieve economic and environmental sustainability, and stresses the inclusion and empowerment of youth, women, minorities, the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Stakeholders are called upon to work together to improve connectivity, and promote “universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services.”

The Plan of Action translates into “concrete action lines” the guiding principles expressed in the Declaration of Principles to promote the use of ICTs and to help countries overcome the information gap. Goals include connecting all villages, schools, hospitals and governments by 2015 and ensuring that half of the world’s people are within reach of ICTs. The plan also calls for making national ‘e-strategies’ an integral part of national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies. It also calls upon developed countries and international financial institutions to assist developing countries prepare and implement national e-strategies, e-government, e-business, e-learning, e-health, e-employment, e-environment, e-agriculture and e-science.

All countries and international organizations are asked to create conditions to increase availability and mobilization of resources for financing development as elaborated in the Monterrey Consensus (see NGLS Roundups 101 & 107). Accordingly, developed countries should allocate at least 0.39% of their gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA), a target that had been agreed ahead of the International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD), held in Monterrey (Mexico) in March 2002, as a step towards the goal of 0.7% of GNP for ODA, as decided by the UN General Assembly some three decades ago.

“Based on the priorities of national development plans and implementation of the commitments, developed countries should increase their efforts to provide more financial resources to developing countries in harnessing ICTs for development,” the Plan of Action says.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS AND FINAL OUTCOMES

The marathon attempt to complete the two WSIS outcome documents for adoption by Heads of State and Government attending the Summit was finalized after long hours of drafting and negotiations. At the second resumed session of PrepCom3, governments resolved the contentious issues and finally approved the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action on 9 December, just one day before the Summit’s official opening. Among the most controversial issues were the following.

Financing

One of the main discussions was the attempt to address the digital divide, or the inequality in access to computers and the Internet in developing countries compared with developed countries. Some countries, mainly African and led by Senegal, called for the creation of a special fund by developed countries and technology firms to help subsidize hardware and software for developing countries and poor nations.

The need to bridge the digital divide and to help stimulate growth of ICTs in developing countries was a stated goal in both outcome documents; however, an agreement on how to finance these efforts was less clear. The language adopted at the end was a compromise that recognized the will expressed “on the one hand by some to create an international voluntary ‘Digital Solidarity Fund,’ and by others to undertake studies concerning existing mechanisms and the efficiency and feasibility of such a fund.”

Consequently, the Plan of Action requests the setting up of a task force, under the auspices of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to review financial mechanisms by December 2004. The study will then be submitted for consideration at Phase II of the Summit in Tunisia in November 2005. “Based on the conclusion of the review, improvements and innovations of financing mechanisms will be considered including the effectiveness, the feasibility and the creation of a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund,” the Plan of Action says. It also mentions a “Digital Solidarity Agenda” aimed at creating conditions for mobilizing human, financial and technological resources to include all people in the emerging information society. “Close national, regional and international cooperation among all stakeholders in the implementation of this Agenda is vital,” the Plan says.

Internet Governance

Another major issue was how to manage the Internet’s addressing and numbering system, the top-level domains and their corresponding numerical Internet addresses, which are used to route digital traffic. The system is currently controlled by a private body, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), based in the United States. A number of delegations from developing countries suggested that the co-ordination of the Internet’s core infrastructure should be placed in a multilateral setting under an international organization such as the ITU, and argued for the creation of an international body to oversee governance of cyberspace. However, delegations from developed countries, including the US and the EU, wanted to maintain the current ICANN structure, a domain operated and regulated mainly by the private sector with few government controls.

In the end, the negotiations did not produce any clear outcome on the issue. Governments realized and accepted that a gap existed between their viewpoints, and decided to set up a working group. The Declaration calls for the establishment of an open and inclusive working group in order to review, to make proposals and to develop policies on how to govern the Internet in time for the Summit’s second phase. The working group will include all stakeholders and intergovernmental organizations, and will address both technical and public policy issues.

Intellectual Property Rights

In the areas of intellectual property rights and the need for enabling environments, universal access policies, and multilingual, diverse and culturally appropriate content to speed ICT adoption and use, particularly in the world’s most underserved economies, governments committed in the final hours of the negotiations to respect a set of common values and principles. The draft text of the Declaration said: “Intellectual property protection is essential to the information society. Existing intellectual property regimes and international agreements should continuously provide this protection, so as to contribute to this objective, thus promoting the necessary balance between owners and users of intellectual property.” However, the text in the final draft was negotiated to read: “Intellectual Property protection is important to encourage

innovation and creativity in the Information Society....Facilitating meaningful participation by all in intellectual property issues and knowledge sharing through full awareness and capacity building is a fundamental part of an inclusive Information Society."

Other Issues

Some participants criticized the final WSIS documents for failing to provide detailed strategies for resolving disputes about Internet governance and the issue of the Digital Solidarity Fund.

Other contentious issues during the last meetings of the preparatory committee in November and December concerned human rights, media rights, information security and privacy (see *NGLS OnLine Roundup 1 on PrepCom3*).

With regard to human rights, the Chinese delegation raised concerns about the reference to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in the first paragraphs of the Summit Declaration. The European Union took the lead at one point in insisting on maintaining the reference. Compromise language was finally agreed upon, which is in the adopted version of the Declaration of Principles and stated in the preambular paragraph: "...premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

PLENARY SESSIONS

In his opening address, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed to the Summit as being unique: "Where most global conferences focus on global threats, this one will consider how best to use a new global asset." The Secretary-General noted that the world has "tools that can propel us toward the Millennium Development Goals; instruments with which to advance the cause of freedom and democracy; vehicles with which to propagate knowledge and mutual understanding."

Mr. Annan called on the Summit to bridge the digital divide, by closing gaps in technological infrastructure; content (about 70% of the world's websites are in English); the gender divide (by ensuring better access for women and girls); and the commercial divide as e-commerce is linking some countries and providing them with commercial opportunities while other countries risk further marginalization. He urged world leaders to provide political will as well as sustained commitment and investment to help the gaps disappear.

ITU Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi appealed to all stakeholders to keep the spirit of cooperation alive well beyond the two years to Tunis, and to back up universally agreed principles with concrete actions to "spark more peace and prosperity across the planet."

"The realization of the Plan of Action is crucial to the long-term success of the Summit. We need imagination and creativity to develop projects and programmes that can really make a difference. We need commitment—on the part of governments, the private sector and civil society—to realistic targets and concrete actions. We need the mobilization of resources and investment," Mr. Utsumi added.

Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation, said information technologies had created a revolution in communication that needed to be extended to the rest of the

world. He stressed the need to find concrete ways of bridging the gap between the haves and the have nots, saying the time had come to take a strong political position.

Renate Bloem, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), spoke about civil society's input and impact in the multi-stakeholder process. She highlighted the establishment of the Civil Society Bureau, which constituted, in her viewpoint, a breakthrough towards the achievement of more democratic governance at the global level. After the deadlock of the governments at the end of PrepCom3 in September 2003, civil society adopted a dual strategy: still committed to the process and the success of the event, but ready to produce their own declaration. "If governments are not able to agree, we the people have the vision and are committed to use the Summit as a springboard for sharing our vision and creating and shaping a people-centred, inclusive information and communication societies," she said.

Speaking on behalf of civil society, Kikki Nordstrom from the World Blind Union, stated that civil society would continue to play an important role in the second phase of the Summit. She called for coherent dialogue between governments and civil society.

Adama Samassekou, President of the WSIS Preparatory Committee, said the half-way point in a long voyage had been reached, and that there would be an eventual move away from the information society to a knowledge society, where all would benefit from the new technologies freely. In the build-up to the Summit, the divisions in the world had become more clear: between the rich and the poor; the educated and the uneducated; those with information and those without; the old and the young; and men and women. He said the Summit should be only the first among many.

Nitin Desai, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for WSIS, said the Summit could provide recognition that ICTs can make a large contribution to democratization, transparency and accountability. He described the focus of the Summit as "more on opportunities than on problems, as it grapples with closing the digital gap between rich countries and poor."

"The effects of the ICT revolution should not be limited exclusively to achieving economic and developmental gains," Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak said in his address. They should also be extended to strengthening links among nations to bring about world peace based on justice, and to supporting national efforts towards freedom and democracy, he added.

During the afternoon plenary session, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said the information society was a new opportunity for the entire world and that it was important to work out a formula so that the exchange of information led to dialogue and shortened distances. At the outset of the millennium, he had raised the need for "dialogue among civilizations," he said, and in the age of cyberspace, one must promote such dialogue. Mr. Khatami expressed concern about inequalities in the development of the infrastructure and global access to and use of ICTs, and said it was important to turn the digital gaps into digital opportunities through the promotion and consolidation of digital ties.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia stressed another aspect of the ICT revolution. "It is for developing countries and especially the least developed among them to seize the opportunity and adopt ICT as a

priority tool to fight hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, discrimination against women, children, the aged and the disabled," she said.

HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLES

The first high-level roundtable of the Summit was held on 11 December with Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade opening an interactive dialogue by posing the question of how to achieve universal ICT access. He identified three main elements for participants to address: access, partnerships, and financing. Before the Summit, President Wade had proposed the establishment of a Digital Solidarity Fund to help developing countries gain access based on financial contributions from donor countries. The proposed Fund would channel technical and financial assistance towards national capacity building, facilitate transfer and use of technology from developed countries, assist in the sharing of knowledge, and develop compatible regulations and standards that respect national characteristics and concerns.

On the question of access, many issues emerged, in particular, connectivity, especially in remote and rural areas. Rwandan President Paul Kagame and others stressed that access to information was a human right; therefore, the matter should be treated as such and institutions should do everything to ensure that right. Many participants stressed the central role of governments as the lead actors and catalysts for promoting the use of ICTs.

As for partnerships, participants spoke of the role of the private sector in delivering services to citizens, with President Wade stressing that in many countries business investment was often more important than foreign aid. A number of participants highlighted the role of volunteers and said they deserved recognition, especially in capacity-building efforts.

Many participants underscored the importance of committing to the Digital Solidarity Fund and the need to increase foreign investment. Participants also suggested that public-private mechanisms could better leverage each other and encourage investment in connectivity, especially for rural telephone infrastructure.

A second high-level roundtable addressed the theme of diversity in cyberspace and examined the opportunities and challenges the world's users and providers of Internet services faced. Nik Gowing of BBC World moderated the discussion, which was chaired by Vaira Vike Freiberga, the President of Latvia.

Discussion revolved around three topics: cultural and linguistic diversity, including the preservation of ancient culture; freedom of expression and media ownership; and law and ethics on the Internet, including the question of censorship, the use of cyberspace in politics and how to agree on fundamental standards.

Participants highlighted cultural diversity as fundamental to the information society and for the promotion of a dialogue between civilizations. The question arose of how to create content electronically in local languages, and to disseminate it. A representative from Chile said that since 85% of Internet users knew English, whereas the vast majority of the world's people did not, only an elite group could make use of the Internet.

Speakers said that public-private partnerships were

crucial for fostering the development of local content, and that extending broadband access to rural communities was one area where business could play a key role. The representative of Egypt stressed that the costs of creating e-culture content were prohibitively expensive, and market forces were not enough to ensure diversity of content. Representatives from both New Zealand and Egypt said that communities, and especially children, should be involved in determining content and should become active owners of their heritage, helping ensure its preservation. Participants also highlighted the need to expand search engines in local languages and to develop capacity for translation of content.

A third roundtable addressed the issue of how to use ICTs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, see *NGLS Roundups* 98, 105, & 106). Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and moderator of the roundtable, said that this question lay at the very heart of the Summit.

The key points of the debate hinged on the role of capacity building, including expanded access to education and training; ICTs for sustainable development and economic growth; and the use of ICTs for the delivery of social services, such as health care and education. Speakers said that ICTs had the potential to help achieve the MDG targets by supporting education, creating jobs, and acting as a tool to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Speakers highlighted the need to develop human resources, especially in regard to the education of girls and women. The representative of Oman identified the population explosion in developing countries; the brain drain; the lack of reliable energy sources and basic ICT infrastructure as blocking the potential of ICTs in developing countries. With reference to sustainable development, participants asked how to create pro-poor policies in national e-strategies. The representative from Chad noted that least developed countries were struggling with basic priorities and could not think of e-strategies yet. Mr. Malloch Brown reiterated that the ICT component in development was central to the overall development strategy and should be mainstreamed as such.

Participants said that ICTs were an undeniably powerful tool to deliver social services, namely, in the fields of health and education, as they could increase access to health information and encourage knowledge sharing.

SIDE EVENTS

During the three-day Summit, over 300 side events were held, including technical workshops; a conference entitled the Role of Science in the Information Society; a World Electronic Media Forum; a major event entitled the Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D), which included an exhibition, workshops, presentations, and discussions; a World Forum on Communication Rights; and a Schoolnet/Cyberschoolbus event on human rights.

ICT4D

Organized by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), and open to the public, the ICT for Development Platform (ICT4D) drew an estimated 35,000-40,000 people from 9-13 December. The exhibition hall provided a

dynamic display of new information and communication technologies and tools, including hundreds of national and international stands and exhibitions, from governments, business, civil society, academia and regional and international organizations.

Numerous workshops and seminars were organized around the exhibitions, ranging from topics such as "negotiations over the Internet" to "social and ethical values in the information society," to practical workshops and youth exhibitions, paintings and video screenings. ICT4D sought to showcase the development dimension of ICTs.

World Electronic Media Forum

From 9-12 December, the World Electronic Media Forum was sponsored and co-hosted by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Switzerland, host country of the Summit. The Forum—which included five main sessions over the first two days, and media executives providing their views during ten specialized workshops on the third day—sought to highlight the contribution of broadcasting and broadcasters to the information society, while examining the role of media and television, universal access to information, freedom of expression, cultural diversity, economic development, social cohesion and education.

During a 10 December panel discussion, entitled "A View from the Bridge," UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor suggested that the world was in danger of losing its sense of community as a result of the new information technologies, and challenged panellists to respond to questions on the implications of today's rapidly evolving communications environment. Had those new technologies revolutionized the relationship between national broadcasters and their governments? Could their competing imperatives—that media be more available to those who govern, and that governments be kept at a distance—be reconciled?

Speaking to the panel by videoconference from London, Greg Dyke, Director-General of the BBC, said that with 24-hour news coverage and broadcasts—a phenomenon made possible by the advent of real-time transmission—there was a danger, although not deliberate, of misreporting because of the need to be first. In times of conflict and war, precisely when governments might prefer that only their view be conveyed, he said, it was all the more important for broadcasters to communicate a broader perspective. This year's coverage of the Iraq war was one such time, he added.

Juan Somavia, General Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO), spoke of the need to bridge the enormous divide between human rights or communications rights and the actual exercise of those rights. Those rights had to be exercised amidst the media's many and multifaceted relationships with government, ownership, advertising and the market, he said. The new technology enlarged on the media's agenda-setting and gate-keeping role: the alternative NGO social forum in Porto Alegre, for example, would not have been possible without the worldwide web. Mass media should also play a greater role in explaining globalization, and promoting knowledge and dialogue on complex, worrisome issues, as the informal alternative media were already doing, he stressed.

High-Level Symposium on Building Knowledge Societies

In addition to its exhibition stands at the ICT4D, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also held a series of events during the Summit. On 9 December, UNESCO organized a high-level

symposium that brought together intellectuals and political leaders to debate their vision of the "construction of future societies in which knowledge will be the core element for ensuring sustainable and equitable development." UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura, who opened the symposium, strongly emphasized the concept of knowledge society as it goes beyond issues of connectivity and technological development to encompass a broader and more empowering vision that is based on the potential of ICT to enhance human development. Mr. Matsuura said that for UNESCO it is essential to include "ethical and intellectual considerations, which embrace such matters such as social inclusion, youth, gender, cultural diversity, human rights and inter-cultural dialogue."

"A community multimedia centre (CMC)—where local people themselves run their own radio station, can use telephones and the Internet and enjoy access to other information services and training—is a tremendous platform for development. Though their use is only in its earliest stages, already we have seen the gains: in key areas such as education, health, agriculture and environmental protection; in the empowerment of women and young people; and, in the broadest sense, in helping a community to take charge of its own future.

"Our challenge now is to 'scale up'—from micro to macro, from pilot projects to widely accessible facilities. Only then will CMCs realize their enormous potential to make a positive difference in the lives of the poor and marginalized. Community access to information technology resources is essential if the digital divide is to be bridged in the developing world."

—Excerpts from Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message to UNESCO's presentation of its national programmes of Community Multimedia Centres in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal, 10 December

Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples & the Information Society

The Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society was held from 8-11 December and addressed the main concerns of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis ICTs, setting out how indigenous communities can benefit from ICTs to meet needs in areas such as culture, the environment, health, education, human rights, women's issues and capacity building.

The Forum adopted its own Declaration and Programme of Action that seek to improve the plight of indigenous communities around the world through the use of ICTs. On 12 December, Ole-Henrik Magga, Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (see NGLS Roundup 104), presented the documents to the Summit's plenary session. "Indigenous peoples are keen to preserve and pass on their diverse cultures to future generations, and are examining the new tools of the information society to see how they can assist," Mr. Magga said.

CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

In a civil society statement released on 5 December, prior to the final agreement of governments, civil society representatives identified two main problem areas that impeded progress in the governmental negotiations: first, how to correct the existing imbalances, including imbalances in riches, rights, power, and access to ICTs; and second, the struggle over human rights, as governments were not able to agree on a commitment to basic human

rights standards as the basis for the information society.

The underlying struggle, according to the NGOs, was that of traditional diplomacy confronting the challenges and realities of the 21st century. "Governments are challenged by the power of new technologies and the way people are using them to network, to create new forms of partnerships and collaboration, to share experiences and knowledge locally and globally. This, combined with fear and security focus of the past two years, compounds political uncertainty and is also played out in the WSIS process." Therefore, NGOs asked, do "we want to base our vision of the information society on fear and uncertainty" or rather on "curiosity, compassion and the spirit of looking forward?"

In their analysis, the WSIS process had slowly but constantly moved from the notion of "information" with a technocratic infrastructure-oriented perspective and the focus on interconnectivity, to the realization that the Summit was about the elaboration of a common, global and people-centred "society." In their statement, civil society representatives said that they were "proud to say that we were crucial in bringing home the idea in the end, that the information society is about people, the communication society is about social progress, and the knowledge society is about society's values. In the end, it is not digital - it is dignity that counts."

On 8 December, civil society groups at the Summit launched their own declaration, entitled *Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs*, which was also adopted as part of the Summit's official documents. The declaration represented the culmination of two years of civil society consultations worldwide, and develops a common vision.

It emphasizes human rights and begins by saying, "At the heart of our vision of information and communication societies is the human being. The dignity and rights of all peoples and each person must be promoted, respected, protected and affirmed. Redressing the inexcusable gulf between levels of development and between opulence and extreme poverty must therefore be our prime concern."

The declaration aspires to building "information and communication societies where development is framed by fundamental human rights and oriented to achieving a more equitable distribution of resources, leading to the elimination of poverty in a way that is non-exploitative and environmentally sustainable." The declaration recognizes the potential of ICTs in overcoming famine, natural catastrophes, new pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, as well as the proliferation of arms.

The declaration contains specific articles on poverty eradication, gender justice, freedom of expression, indigenous people's rights, workers' rights (including the right for online workers to form and join trade unions), cultural diversity and the need to safeguard certain knowledge in the public domain.

In an 11 December press statement, civil society organizations expressed that they "have been working inside the Summit process to shape a people-centred,

inclusive and equitable concept of what we call 'information and communication societies.'" It also stated that while governments hesitated to reaffirm long agreed-upon human rights standards in their negotiations, the civil society declaration develops ideas and strategies on how to realize, fulfil and bring forward development and human rights of all peoples from a social justice perspective.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING - A PIONEER SUMMIT

According to UNDP's Administrator, Marc Malloch Brown, the issues and themes of ICTs and the information society are not yet well defined—unlike other global issues such as sustainable development and human rights—and ambivalence among governments on ICT issues remains. Phase I of the Summit was therefore, according to Mr. Malloch Brown, a "pioneer summit."

Summing up, Mr. Itsumi said the first phase of WSIS, including the many intergovernmental preparatory meetings and negotiations, was an agenda-setting exercise, where governments outlined the major issues to be discussed. According to Mr. Itsumi, the Summit was successful in elaborating the 11 key principles on the information society as a framework for future discussions, as outlined in the Declaration. Nitin Desai, in his remarks, pointed out another positive outcome: multilateralism and the culture of consensus was still working on the international level.

The Declaration itself ends on an optimistic note in its last paragraph: "We are firmly convinced that we are collectively entering a new era of enormous potential.... All individuals can soon, if we take the necessary actions, together build a new Information Society based on a shared knowledge and founded on global solidarity and a better mutual understanding between peoples and nations. We trust that these measures will open the way to the future development of a true knowledge society."

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Useful websites:

- Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations (<http://prepcocm.net/wsis>)
- Communication Rights in the Information Society (www.crisinfo.org)
- Heinrich-Böll Foundation (www.worldsummit2003.de)
- ICT for Development Platform (www.ict-4d.org)
- Swiss Government (www.wsis-online.net)
- World Electronic Media Forum (www.wemfmedia.org)
- Non-Governmental Liaison Service (www.unsystem.org/ngls)

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