

**Speech of M. Olivier PIOU – Chief Executive Officer of Axalto –
United Nations World Summit on Information Society – Geneva – December 12, 2003**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Axalto contribution to the World Summit is to provide a fundamental building block for the development of the modern information society, able to ensure universal interaction, education and knowledge sharing while protecting citizens' privacy and human rights.

Smart cards, as we call them at Axalto, are able to securely combine the conventional identity token that you all know (with your name, picture, address and signature securely engraved in a piece of plastic) together with a digital identity, which is accessible by machines, computers and networking devices.

Providing secure identification over digital networks is essential to ensure trust and confidence in the applications and contents that are made available to human beings for their personal development, for interactions with an authentic dialog, and for commercial exchanges.

However providing identity to the cyberspace is not without risk.

Advanced technologies like biometrics for example can turn into the most positive if they are combined with a portable secure object like the smart card, that will be presented by citizens when they need and want to be authenticated, and where the biometric signatures will be stored. In this case, biometrics strengthens identification and makes it more convenient for citizens, children and elderly in particular, that for example do not have to remember the secret PIN code of their banking card any more.

But biometrics can also turn into the most dangerous for the civil society if such identification technologies are deployed without a smart card. I.e. if they are used without asking citizens to keep with them their identity card, and without asking them for a voluntary action to be authenticated: software and global digital networks would then be able to permanently track citizens activities, without them knowing.

Wireless technologies also present a similar threat to privacy: while it is relatively easy to turn off a cellular phone (because all of them have an ON/OFF button!), radio-frequency identification systems - also known as RFID or contactless systems - are activated from a distance. It becomes so very easy to install a reading antenna, in the subway or in any place like in this conference room, to detect who is there without awareness and consent.

Numerous books and movies have predicted that our civil society would not be wise enough to protect its basic universal human rights in this digital age. However, the more we have powerful tools available to us, the more we have the duty to use them for the best of humanity. This is why I wanted to raise your awareness today.

This is why also, we at Axalto believe that it is essential that digital identity be designed to ensure trust and confidence in modern digital systems, and that it be combined with conventional physical identity into a secure portable object that citizens can voluntarily present to be identified, to authorities in the physical world and to on-line services in the virtual world.

Axalto is determined to drive forward the smart card technology for superior trust and confidence, and to keep enabling every individual to play safely an active role in the modern universal civil society.

Thank you for your attention.

Olivier PIOU – Chief Executive Officer of Axalto