

(Civil Society Speaker)

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In some respects civil society has been the main beneficiary of this event.

It is the first time that civil society has come together in such diversity and in such numbers from all over, to work together on information and communication issues. We have learned enormously from each other, and from our interactions with others, and have built what we believe to be enduring links and bridges between us.

Most significantly, we managed to construct and negotiate a process that resulted in broad consensus on a coherent, comprehensive and convincing Civil Society Declaration on our vision of the information society [to be launched tomorrow].

The CRIS Campaign has worked hard over the last two years on this Summit, but we believe our efforts are well rewarded. The Civil Society Declaration is a major outcome of this Summit. The CRIS Campaign enthusiastically endorses it and is only too aware of the sweat and tears, and compromise, that went into ensuring that a single, strong, voice would emerge from the bulk of civil society.

Interestingly, the Intergovernmental Declaration and the Civil Social Declaration share one crucial sentence: "Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organisation." The Civil Society Declaration, however, goes further in proposing how we can build an information and communication society that has people at the centre. It confronts key dangers such as excessive copyright protection and monopolies on intellectual products, growing concentration of media ownership, censorship, and the limitations of a purely market-driven approach. And it affirms for instance the role of community media, of the public domain and the global commons. We will be presenting concrete examples of these at our **World Forum on Communication Rights** all day tomorrow in the Salle Mont Blanc here.

The role of ICTs in this process of civil society networking, especially in between physical meetings, was significant - indeed it would have been impossible to achieve what we did without them. But the huge imbalances in ICTs globally were also reflected in our organising processes and we regret that so many in civil society, especially from poorer communities, were excluded from the process; and that the resources were unavailable to engage in more direct interaction. During the preparations for this phase of the Summit, some governments worked closely with civil society in drafting their national positions. The next two years offer an opportunity for all governments to extend this and to involve civil society as equal partners in their national processes and in the implementation of national action plans.

In the coming two years, CRIS as part of civil society must rise to the challenges outlined in our Declaration. We believe that civil society must build on the process that was begun here, at all levels. Furthermore, we invite governments, intergovernmental organisations and all others to join with us in creating an information and communication society for all.