



World Summit on the Information Society

**Speech by Philip J. Jennings
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Union Network International is a global union federation representing millions of workers in the information society.

We are disappointed that the declaration and action plan fail to address the world of work.

Our aim is to put people first.

This has been a tough time for working people.

Since the net bubble burst, two million jobs have gone in telecommunications alone. Today we have the global sourcing of work and an emerging global labour market.

So much positive change could emerge. Yet we feel an opportunity has been missed to promote a global strategy for jobs and decent work.

We are concerned that governments have refused to include a reference to freedom of association, to collective bargaining, to fairness at work, to the need for global health and safety standards, and this in a world where breaches of union rights occur in 133 countries.

They are sending the message that they want to take the low road to the information society.

We talk of connectivity and access but tens of thousands of working people are disciplined for accessing union websites. We should be promoting online rights for online workers to end this tyranny at the workplace.

What of those producing IT products in export processing zones where there are no rights?

This is hardly an age of enlightenment – and the threat of a backlash should be taken seriously.

Too many hi-tech companies slam the door on union rights and transfer jobs and livelihoods as if they were a commodity.

We should be promoting a global dialogue between global unions and business. This is an essential component to corporate social responsibility. We should be talking about labour policies everywhere in the firm. Global sourcing of work requires respect for global labour standards.

We should be promoting opportunities for lifelong learning, looking at ways of financing and certifying training in e-skills. We need more attention to gender equality. We need to ensure a seat at the table for people when change is negotiated.

This Summit must reaffirm the need for media pluralism, for controls over market share and cross ownership. Without this we will sap the vitality from our democracies.

This Summit must promote creators' rights; the language is insufficient to protect their economic and moral rights.

To bridge the digital divide we support universal access to services.

We welcome the recognition of using postal networks to bring technology closer to the people throughout a nation.

We have a dialogue with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) – it is wrong that your host, the ITU, will not build a dialogue with us.

The telecomm regulators were in conference this week; we disagree that competitive markets alone will bridge the digital divide.

We were not invited to put our case, we represent telecomm workers in 150 countries, their voice deserves to be heard.

Our appeal is that this Summit has a chance to ensure that the world of work is given a real profile in 2005. On the road to Tunis we want to send a positive message that we all want to put people first.