Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-2)
17-28 February 2003

ROUND TABLE No. 1:

"ICT infrastructure and financing"

Moderator: Mr Francisco Gómez Alamillo (Secretary-General, AHCIET)

Participants:

Government:

Mr Yang Zemin (President, China Academy of Telecommunication Research, China)

International organizations:

Mr Yann Brenner (IADB)

Mr Hamadoun I. Touré (Director, BDT, ITU)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Artur Serra (Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya)

Mr Amadou Top (OSIRIS)

Rapporteurs:

Mr Juan Luis Castro (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Ms Claudia Sarrocco (ITU)

I.   Summary of Presentations

Mr Francisco Gómez Alamillo opened the discussions by pointing out some of the major concerns surrounding the development of telecommunication infrastructure. He noted that universal access to communication services was considered a fundamental objective. However, the development of the infrastructure presented many challenges to society. A key theme in that regard would be the elaboration of models to be used to achieve sustainable infrastructure development, which would provide a return on investment. Universal access was, moreover, not only about infrastructure, but also about the development of appropriate and relevant content. The main question that had to be

answered, therefore, was how telecommunication services and the Internet could be made available to the whole population. He noted that there was a need for innovative thinking and for new models to bridge the digital divide.

Mr Yang Zemin presented an overview of the state of telecommunications in China, giving some hints in relation to the financing of infrastructure. Regarding a model for infrastructure development, he affirmed that each country needed to elaborate its own method, tailored to its specific needs and objectives. In his view, financing should come from the market, while the government should encourage effective competition and investment, thereby creating an appropriate environment for enterprises. Moreover, the government could support the growth of ICTs and applications by financing new applications such as e-governance, or by providing direct funding to infrastructure development through innovative research projects and initiatives, such as those undertaken on broadband by the Ministry of Science and Technology in China.

Mr Yann Brenner stressed that achieving equitable and sustainable development was one of the main objectives of Latin American countries. Such development could also be achieved through the utilization of ICTs, which could help in filling the gaps that existed at the social, economic and cultural levels. For those reasons, the Inter-American Development Bank was working to foster the growth of infrastructure by mobilizing funding and assisting countries in building the appropriate strategies, and by supporting programmes of technical assistance. It was also to be noted that the development of ICT infrastructure would need quality investment, which would help in reinforcing the ICT capacity in each region. For that reason, new models of investment should be implemented and collaboration at regional level promoted. Public/private partnerships and cooperation between different organizations would also have an important role to play.

Mr Hamadoun Touré acknowledged the dual role of ICTs, which were a tool and a catalyst for other sectors, but were also a sector in themselves. He put forward some of the main challenges being encountered in the development of such technologies. In fact, to achieve sustainable development it would be necessary to understand the needs of users and the roles of the different stakeholders, structure appropriate national, regional and supraregional ICT policies and study innovative mechanisms to establish mutually beneficial partnerships for investment and infrastructure development. He noted that ITU had been playing a fundamental role in that field since its establishment, and underscored the fact that the Istanbul Declaration had identified six main programmes for development, which would be implemented in coordination with other initiatives undertaken by the private sector, governments, NGOs, etc., to transform the digital divide into a digital opportunity.

Mr Artur Serra began his presentation by affirming that the digital divide started with the digital infrastructure divide. There was in fact a fracture in the availability of infrastructure and network capacity: optical fibres and broadband services allowed new uses and applications. Those differences were also reflected in the "digital research infrastructure divide", as without research there was no innovation. The speaker proposed the implementation of a project to build a global research network, open to all countries and stakeholders, in order to experiment with future developments and help less advanced economies to enter the development spiral (from research to dissemination, privatization, commercialization and economic exploitation of new technologies). He highlighted the importance for developing regions such as Latin America and Africa of having connections with enough bandwidth for the new Internet (Media Internet).

Mr Amadou Top said that the problem of infrastructure was specifically related to developing countries, as in more developed economies there was even an excess of bandwidth capacity thanks to the use of new technologies such as fibre cables and satellites. That capacity was therefore not equitably distributed. That being the case, he suggested putting in place a mechanism for "digital solidarity", i.e. a fund to enable all countries to participate in digital development. He also added that the main focus of the discussion during WSIS should be on the need to improve public/private partnerships and define efficient national strategies and appropriate regulatory and financing mechanisms for ICT development. In that regard, he pointed to the need to adapt the deregulation model to the special needs of each region and not necessarily to follow the same model as the one implemented in developed countries.

Mr Pawel Stelmaszczyk pointed out the importance of both capacity and content in the debate on the development of ICTs. His presentation focused on the obstacles to development that were thrown up by the high cost of building a communication network. To overcome that barrier, operators should be encouraged to share costs and to have a third party - usually a local government, or a company owned by it - that could finance the deployment of that primary infrastructure, which could then be open, without discrimination, to all stakeholders. Private parties would then be willing to assume part of the risk in the knowledge that the involvement of governments serves to reduce the cost of the civil works, representing a large portion of total expenditure, and to obtain financing at preferential rates. He gave some actual examples in order to demonstrate that, with the commitment of local government, such a mechanism could be successfully implemented.

II.   Discussions and action proposals

The discussions centred on the problem of financing infrastructure development, with many participants expressing their concerns about the effect of privatizing telecommunication operators in developing countries. Such privatization often led to a private monopoly in the hands of multinational companies that were not interested in developing the network in rural and remote areas. Additionally, new applications such as Voice over IP and the reduction of international settlement rates were seen by some countries as hampering the capacity of the government to finance infrastructure development.

While many participants shared the view that there should not be a unique model for development, it was suggested that examples of best practices could be applied in respect of local needs and conditions. Privatization was not seen as a negative step, if sustained by appropriate regulation and a good environment for competition. Furthermore, there was the feeling that the private sector alone would not be able to sustain the cost of infrastructure development, and that the role of government was crucial in that regard.

The active participation of all stakeholders in the development of the ICT infrastructure was considered fundamental, and the development of public/private partnership was supported, together with the need for a cooperative regional approach to those issues (the example of NEPAD in Africa was given).

The importance of broadband for the development of new services was also expressed; however, it was noted that the cost of developing such a service was particularly high and could not be sustained by private companies alone. Additionally, in the view of some participants, broadband should not be included within the scope of universal service obligations.

During the discussion, it was noted that fostering the growth of ICT infrastructure called for the active participation and collaboration of all the different stakeholders, as well as the commitment and support of the government, which has a fundamental role to play both in building the appropriate regulatory environment and in helping with the financing of communication networks. The digital divide can be transformed into a digital opportunity only by providing equal and sustainable access to the information infrastructure.

Several ideas for action were put forward during the discussion, in particular regarding the need to:

a) Help governments in elaborating appropriate strategies and policies to develop ICT infrastructures.

b) Raise awareness on the importance of the role of governments in infrastructure development.

c) Foster enhanced coordination between the different international organizations in the sector, so as to benefit from existing synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.

d) Develop guidelines for implementing partnerships between public and private stakeholders.

e) Encourage cooperation at the regional level with a view to aggregating demand, attracting investment and exploiting economies of scale.

f) Institute a global fund managed at the international level to finance infrastructure development.

g) Develop statistical indicators to assess e-readiness in different countries, set targets for evaluation and have measurable goals.

h) Support the active involvement of developing and least developed countries in ICT policy-making at the international level.

i) Promote the dissemination of open standards and low-cost equipment and support the spread of open-source software.

ROUND TABLE No. 2:

"Access to knowledge, open access, cultural and linguistic diversity, local content"

Moderator: Ms Lyndall Shopé Mafole
                   (Chair of the Presidential National Commission on ISAD, South Africa)

Participants:

Government:

H.E. Mr Michel Peissik (Ambassador with responsibility for WSIS, France)

International organizations:

Mr Abdul Waheed Khan (UNESCO)

Mr Richard Owens (WIPO)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Alan Alegre and Ms Olinca Marino (CRIS Campaign)

Mr Francis Tusubira (Makerere University)

Mr Niv Ahituv (Tel Aviv University)

Business entities:

Mr Latif Ladid (ISOC/Ericsson-Telebit)

Rapporteurs:

Joël Desaules (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Yves Courrier (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

I.   Summary of presentations

Mr Latif Ladid presented the evolution of the Internet since 1974, noting that there had been three generations: the first generation (1974-1983): 10^4 users, 9.6 Kbps bandwidth; the second generation (1984-2003?): 10^9 users, 33 Kbps bandwidth, IPv4 protocol; and the third generation (future): 10^{38} users, 1 Mbps bandwidth, IPv6 protocol. The first two generations represented what may be called "tourist" status, given the need to connect each time. The third generation would represent "resident" status, since, as with water and electricity, the connections were permanent. Every individual would have several Internet addresses, and would thus be identifiable in everything he or she did, which raised the crucial problem of security.

Mr Niv Ahituv noted that there was a striking contradiction between two objectives of the round table, namely improving access to information and knowledge, and producing relevant content. The former called for creating and distributing as much information and knowledge as possible, improving communication between governments and citizens and reducing the digital divide, with the risks that entailed, namely information overload, inefficiency and State surveillance. The latter involved creating content geared to different audiences, in line with marketing techniques, placing such content in context and even filtering it according to

needs. However, who would have the authority for such filtering? Four types of action were desirable here: 1) anti-trust measures to avoid monopolies; 2) ensuring equitable access to data; 3) safeguarding basic individual rights, including the right to know what personal data about oneself is stored and to have such data modified; 4) distinguishing between factual data and subjective data.

Mr Abdul Waheed Khan recalled that in the face of the challenges of the information society, UNESCO, by virtue of its mandate, defended a number of key principles: free circulation of information and universal access to knowledge, access to education, freedom of expression and cultural diversity. In that context, the role of local content - knowledge and experience created by communities, and which belonged to those communities - was crucial. A dearth of local content, dominance of content from developed countries, inadequate or inappropriate content in terms of language or cultural references and respect for intellectual property rights were some of the challenges facing local production, which was also beset by a shortage of financial and training resources. To that must be added problems of access to state-of-the-art technologies, lack of commitment on the part of decision-makers, and market forces. Nonetheless, there was always a wealth of local talent, which was why UNESCO had taken numerous initiatives in the creation of local content, whether by supplying equipment, organizing training or conducting promotion and dissemination activities. He noted, however, that the sustainability of multimedia community centres was still an issue.

H.E. Mr Michel Peissik indicated that access to content was a crucial issue for the Internet, comprising three aspects. The first was access to free content, which included access to public and administrative information, cultural information and educational programmes. Increasing the number of public access points was also an important objective. The second aspect was cultural diversity, which must be enshrined in a legal instrument setting out the many rights and obligations of States in that area, such as the protection of languages threatened with extinction, support for creation and the preservation of heritage. The third aspect was support for creativity, which required specific measures and was dependent on the ability to use technological tools and software. France had adopted several measures in that regard which had proved effective. France also considered that developing countries must receive support in that connection. Finally, paramount principles such as freedom of expression, protection of intellectual property and tolerance must always be respected.

Mr Francis Tusubira stated that access to scientific knowledge was essential for the developing countries as a means of creating new momentum. However, the content available in developing countries was inadequate, while accessing developing country publications was too expensive. Furthermore, there was a lack of understanding of intellectual property issues, resulting in failure to exploit a key resource. In that situation, many things could be done to improve matters - setting clear targets in terms of investment in research and ICTs; local capacity-building; supporting developing country access to scientific and technical publications; publicizing intellectual property issues while defending free software; supporting university institutions; setting up regional consortia for information access.

Mr Richard Owens underscored the significant problems that ICTs raised in the field of intellectual property. For those holding rights, unauthorized use is a threat to the system. Governments must establish an appropriate legislative framework for the transfer of intellectual content without introducing too many ad hoc rules. WIPO had to take account of developments, in particular following the WTO TRIPS agreement. Solutions could be found to those problems. For rights holders, new commercial models must take account of non-economic desiderata, and the responsible use of new digital techniques for managing rights would provide better protection. For governments, more rigorous application of WIPO treaties would provide better protection for

cultural expression; specific needs could be satisfied through exceptions and restrictions. WIPO, for its part, was endeavouring to respond more effectively to the developing countries' needs for collective management of rights and protection of the property of indigenous communities.

Mr Alan Alegre said that we were at a new stage of the information society, in which the digital divide reflected a social divide. The impact of ICTs on human beings and communities was far from neutral, giving rise to the following questions: How to make access affordable? How to protect private life and avoid State surveillance? How to combat media concentration and broaden the public domain? How to ensure balanced information exchanges?

Following a request from the CRIS Campaign, the **Moderator** agreed to give the floor to Ms Olinca Marino in order to improve the gender balance of the panel.

Ms Olinca Marino observed that the creation of appropriate content respecting linguistic and cultural diversity paved the way for a more open and democratic society and greater participation on the part of citizens, and that that would benefit hitherto marginalized communities, whose knowledge and traditional values would be preserved, thereby ensuring a genuine two-way dialogue and true interactivity. Another major obstacle to be overcome was the gender divide. Recognition and sharing of different views of the world would bring an unequalled richness to intercultural dialogue.

II.   Discussion and action proposals

The discussion provided an opportunity to take up a number of the key points emerging from the presentations. It was noted that access in rural areas called for specific measures such as the use of multimedia community centres. Production of local content, protection of the cultural heritage and linguistic diversity constituted difficult challenges, particularly because of the lack of appropriate linguistic tools. Education and access to knowledge (including the fight to eradicate illiteracy, particularly of women in rural areas), the training of young people and the enhancement of skills remained priority issues in many countries. It was suggested that one theme for the Summit should focus on gender issues. Libraries and virtual universities could potentially be extremely useful in that connection. It was proposed that a special session focusing on the question of gender equality and the WSIS be convened between the first and the second phase of WSIS. The question of freedom of expression gave rise to a lively debate, some participants considering it to be an inalienable right which could be subject to no restriction, with others believing that specific measures might be necessary in order to protect minors and ensure respect for the dignity of the human person.

ROUND TABLE No. 3:

"ICTs and security"

Moderator: Mr Eduardo Gelbstein (formerly of the United Nations)

Participants:

Government:

H.E. Mr Andrey Korotkov
(First Deputy Minister, Ministry for Communications and Informatization, Russia)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Urs E. Gattiker (EICAR)

Ms Olivia Bosch (RIIA)

Business entities:

Ms Lauren Hall (Microsoft)

Mr Stuart Hotchkiss (Hewlett-Packard)

Rapporteurs:

Juan Luis Castro (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Claudia Sarrocco (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

I   Summary of presentations

In his presentation, entitled "The keys to security project success", **Mr Stuart Hotchkiss** gave an overview of the practical implementation of a security project and the main aspects to be considered. He stressed the need for a concrete and coordinated approach, aimed at correctly identifying the problem and fixing its cause, rather than simply eliminating the symptom.

Ms Lauren Hall agreed with the ideas expressed by the previous speaker, adding that the problem of security was a complex one. Companies had to find ways of improving security while safeguarding the privacy of users and guaranteeing system reliability and business integrity. There was a need to develop a trustworthy system, and there was no simple solution to the problem. The main challenge for a company such as Microsoft lay in the growing number of users and devices that were connected to the network.

H.E. Mr Andrey Korotkov, stressing the need to increase network security, provided an overview of the current situation of ICT development in Russia and underlined the need to consider the consequences and potential dangers deriving from the dramatic development of ICTs. He also pointed out that in the implementation of technical protocols the creation of a culture of security was crucial.

Ms Olivia Bosch joined the previous speakers in affirming that ICT security had to be a management process and not an end in itself. She also affirmed the need to improve the exchange of communication and information between stakeholders by spreading best practices around the world. A certain degree of standardization of information security processes would also be important, but without forgetting that every business was different and therefore required tailored solutions.

Mr Urs Gattiker observed that the use of always-on systems and wireless networks was posing new and far-reaching threats to the security of the infrastructure, and particularly to private users, who were often not sufficiently aware of security concerns. He stressed the need to create an agency to assist such users and SMEs in dealing with security problems. That entity should foster transnational collaboration and information-sharing, provide security alerts and raise people's awareness of the security issue, thereby reducing the risk of cyber-security incidents.

The Moderator for the present round table, **Mr Eduardo Gelbstein**, concluded the first part of the round table with a presentation on the legal instruments currently in force for the prevention and punishment of cybercrime. Unlike in the tangible world, there was no effective mechanisms for the enforcement of laws in cyberspace, and most virus creators had never been found or punished. There was thus far no appropriate legislation to deal with the issue of information "insecurity", and the efforts deployed to date at the international level were insufficient. One of the most recent conventions dealing with the issue - the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime - had not yet been ratified by member countries, and it was therefore not in force.

II   Discussions and action proposals

The discussions focused on the complexity of the security issue and on the need for the participation of all stakeholders in building trust and confidence in ICTs. Many participants underlined the need for cross-border cooperation and for a collective approach to the issue. The importance of information-sharing and of having a forum in which to exchange information was also mentioned, as was the need to take account of the work done in the field by different international organizations.

Participants also pointed out that information security covers not only the Internet, but also other networks using protocols different from IP (such as SITA or SWIFT, or police networks).

The question of having appropriate legislation dealing with security issues at the national and international levels was also raised, as was the concern that an excessively detailed body of legislation could not take into consideration the widely varying needs of users and would therefore impose an inappropriate burden on the use of technology.

It emerged that security is a very broad topic, encompassing technology, best practices, standards, ethical and regulatory issues and legislation. There was a common feeling among participants that it is necessary to build trust and confidence in the information society. That trust, however, cannot be "built" by law or technology, but is a process in which everyone has a stake.

Other related issues were raised, and it was suggested that ICT security should be among the priorities for discussion during the World Summit on the Information Society.

Several ideas for action were also put forward during the discussion, in particular regarding the need to:

a)   Raise awareness of the fact that simple things need to be done first. Up-to-date and properly configured software, clear security policies, accountability for security matters and proper training are fundamental elements for building a more secure virtual environment.

b)   Promote the sharing of knowledge and experience and spread best practices on computer security.

c)   Develop a better understanding of national and international legislation on information-security-related matters.

d)   Explore the degree to which the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime could be adopted by a wider international community, perhaps under the aegis of the United Nations.

e)   Enhance the dialogue with developing countries and support their activities in all aspects of information security.

f)   Discuss in more detail the potential conflict between the need to monitor activity in cyberspace and the individual's right to privacy, and the need to find an appropriate balance between the two.

ROUND TABLE No. 4:

"The needs of special groups"

Moderator: Ms Hendrica Okondo (Programme Coordinator, UNIFEM)

Participants:

Government:

Mr Abel Caine (Manager, Business & Systems Development for e-Government, Fiji)

International organizations:

Ms Kathleen Gordon (Caribbean Development Bank)

Mr Pietro Sicuro (OIF/AIF Francophonie)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Nick Moraitis (Youth Caucus)

Mr Bruno Tardieu (ATD Quart Monde)

Mr José Manuel Morán (CERMI)

Ms Katelin Gillis (Metis Nation Canada)

Rapporteurs:

Ibrahim Keita (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Mr Noh-Ik Park (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

I.   Summary of presentations

Mr Abel Caine presented the special needs of the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). He explained that the "islands paragraph" of the Tokyo Declaration (paragraph 11, section 2) perfectly captured the unique problems of SIDS and should therefore be given the necessary prominence and attention. He also indicated that the 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories were actively working on Regional E-Strategy (PIIPP) and National ICT strategy plans with the UNDP e-Pacifika project. He highlighted the unique Fiji government call for the appointment of WSIS Regional Commissioners to ensure that countries make significant progress on the goals of the 2003 Declaration. Finally, he called for support from SIDS, small states and sympathetic countries to support the Fiji government's motion for the inclusion and strengthening of the "islands paragraph" and the appointment of WSIS Regional Commissioners.

"Special circumstances of regional Small Island Developing States: These countries, vulnerable to environmental hazards, and characterized by small, homogenous markets, high costs of access and equipment, human resource constraints exacerbated by the problem of "brain-drain", limited access to networks and remote locations, will require particular attention and tailored solutions to meet their needs."

Mr Nick Moraitis noted that the young do not constitute a group with "special needs", but instead one with something "special to offer". He highlighted the leadership of young people in driving innovation in the technology industry and their commitment to social development initiatives, as well as recognizing that young people and children remain one of the most vulnerable groups. He then highlighted key issues relating to the Youth Caucus, including the need for the Summit to broadly address education issues, including accessibility, relevance and quality. He pointed to employment as a top priority for young people, the potential for youth entrepreneurship to drive national development, and the fast pace of change in the job market globally. Finally, he encouraged delegates to use the Summit process to mobilize support for the creation of digital opportunities by young people.

Mr Pietro Sicuro stressed the role of international organizations in the building of the information society. The Francophonie, whose membership ranged from some of the poorest countries to some of the most industrialized ones worked towards helping special groups to harness the potential of ICTs in order to overcome the obstacles they faced. A common feature of those actions was partnering with local stakeholders that were able to identify their needs and were the most motivated to implement appropriate solutions. That demonstrated that standard recipes should not be applied to communities with different needs and that the latter benefit in a sustainable way from acquired knowledge.

Ms Kathleen Gordon indicated that with the transformation to information societies, there were groups to which attention must be paid if significant human potential and human capital were not to be lost. She also stressed that in order to have all-inclusive information societies, the real challenge was not the technology itself but the process and approach and the commitment to including special groups such as digital have-nots, the poor, the old, women, and so on. Special proposals for addressing the needs of such groups were made under the headings of policy, advocacy and financing.

Mr Bruno Tardieu told the story of a young street child in Africa who was delighted to know that other children from all over the world were able to see the message that he had posted on the Web. He also emphasized that special attention had to be drawn to young people at low-income levels in urban areas, and made a plea for poor people not to be forgotten in the information society, as they had much to contribute to it.

Mr José Manuel Morán explained that 10 per cent of the population in Spain had disabilities and that the number of disabled persons was expected to increase due to the ageing of the population. He therefore argued that information and communication facilities and services needed to be provided in such a way that they could be accessed and used by persons to overcome their disabilities and contribute to the information society.

Ms Katelin Gillis explained that the Aboriginal Canada Portal (ACP) Working Group encouraged the development and awareness of online aboriginal content and examined ways to reduce the digital divide between urban, rural and remote aboriginal communities. As a result, the first Annual National Connecting Aboriginal Canadian Forum was held in March 2002. Moreover, it was noted that there are initiatives in Canada that are available to some aboriginal peoples but not to others, for example, the access to tele-health or e-health. She introduced Canada's vision for the global information society, to the effect that everyone has the potential to participate in that society and should have the opportunity to do so. She concluded that the Metis Nation was looking to WSIS to ensure that not only Canada's indigenous peoples but all indigenous people's needs were represented throughout the process up to 2005.

Mr Jean Marie R. Noel recalled that, in addition to being a small island, Haiti was also the only LDC in the ALAC region. He insisted that LDCs were a special group with special needs and that those needs had to be addressed if a global information society was to come into being. He discussed some of the challenges and possible solutions to the entry of LDCs into the information society, but stressed that the implementation of those solutions was subject to a strong commitment on the part of the national authorities as well as of the international community.

Ms Gillian M. Marcelle stressed that gender equality was a cross-cutting issue and suggested that women's rights and gender equality perspectives should be integrated into every aspect of WSIS, particularly the draft declaration and plan of action. She argued that unless those steps were taken, most of the world would not benefit from the information society and the Summit would not maximize its contribution to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. To meet that challenge, urgent and concerted actions were suggested: ensuring the active participation of gender equality advocates, setting targets for delegations to comprise at least 30 per cent women, including gender and ICT experts, and implementing an information dissemination campaign on the Summit including all forms of media.

Discussions and action proposals

The discussions were highly interactive in nature, most speakers focusing on the reasons why their needs should be taken into account in the WSIS process and the ways in which solutions could be implemented effectively. The main issues raised by participants had to do with physical, geographical and economic differences. Requests were made for attention to be paid to refugees, women living in conflict countries, gender equality, education for girls, persons with disabilities, lifelong learning, the linguistic divide, children's rights and financing.

The panel noted, in response to questions raised, that there were many special funding systems for ICT projects. However, they needed to be re-engineered to address the needs of special groups. Investment in education was crucial and a prerequisite to the knowledge society. It was also added that ICTs should not create another form of isolation, and that all stakeholders have to be equally involved.

A general sense emerging from the present round table was that these groups are specific constituencies for which extra efforts should be made to enable them to contribute to WSIS. Some of these groups, such as the young and women, were cross-cutting and could be found among the disabled, the indigenous and the poor, in small islands, LDCs, etc. It was stated that the young and women were not only part of all those groups, but also statistically constituted 53 per cent of the world's population. It was noted that those constituencies had special contributions to offer, and that excluding such contributions was a luxury that the information society could not afford if it was to bring to humanity the new beginning that everyone hoped for: a world in which equality and equal opportunity have true meaning.

Two broad categories of action were identified. The first was to ensure that all groups are given special attention in all the points of the action plan, so that a balance is kept or restored where appropriate (this applies to women, the young, the elderly, the disabled, refugees, small islands, etc…).

Secondly, it was necessary to establish specific and measurable indicators that will allow for a monitoring of the participation of the respective groups in the plan of action.

It was strongly recommended that efforts be made to ensure participation of all the stakeholders in the WSIS preparatory processes and in WSIS itself in 2003 and 2005, and to ensure that the Declaration and the Plan of Action are as inclusive as possible.

ROUND TABLE No. 5:

"Capacity building"

Moderator: Mr Marcel Boisard (Executive Director, UNITAR)

Participants:

Government:

Mr Tony Zeitoun (CIDA)

H.E. Mr Sirous Nassiri
(Adviser to the Minister of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, Islamic Republic of Iran)

International organizations:

Mr Pierre Dandjinou (UNDP)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Ms Rabia Abdel Krim (ENDA)*

Business entities:

Mr Arthur Reilly (CISCO)

Rapporteurs:

Mr Mario Maniewicz (ITU)

Ms Usha Dwarka-Canabady (ITU WSIS Team)

*could not participate for health reasons

I.   Summary of presentations

Very interesting presentations were made from five very different perspectives. They can only be very briefly summarized here.

Mr Marcel Boisard, Executive Director of UNITAR, highlighted the fact that UNITAR had been designing and conducting training and capacity-building programmes since 1995. The Internet had become a true knowledge vector. To develop the digital economy, it was necessary to invest in knowledge-building for individuals so that they could install the tools and use the tools and skills as well as disseminate them among the population. Similarly, the Internet was an accelerator of political and social modernization. Wider access to the Internet would contribute to bridging the digital divide - an end to which WSIS should make an essential contribution.

H.E. Mr Sirous Nassiri felt that the main challenge for the developing world was to achieve sustainable capacity-building in the ICT sector. That was particularly difficult in such a volatile and rapidly-changing environment. Visionaries, as well as planners, should be engaged in creating an innovative capacity-building system. The key word when it comes to achieving all this is "access". A set of policies was required in each country in order to attract the private sector, dramatically improve competition, establish an efficient regulatory body, promote the transfer of technology, attract investment and involve international organizations.

 Mr Tony Zeitoun stressed that capacity-building was a long-term process of facilitating the acquisition of knowledge by individuals about a particular sector, so that they became empowered and acquired the necessary skills to successfully perform their required functions with a view to improving their quality of life. The minimum prerequisites in any given country would include a policy framework for pedagogical reform, the availability of appropriate financing, the adoption of a train-the-trainers approach and the availability of the training contents to be delivered through ICTs.

Mr Arthur Reilly said that CISCO considered its Networking Academy Program to be a model for sustainable capacity-building in the ICT sector. Today there were more than 10 000 academies worldwide. The initial curriculum had been augmented with courses provided by various world leaders in the IT field. Participants that acquired the necessary skills received a certificate of competence. ITU had been a major partner in expanding that initiative to reach many least developed and developing countries. UNDP had launched a similar initiative. Strategic partners that had played a key role in the success of the programme were governments, academia, the private sector, NGOs at the local level, as well as international and donor organizations.

Mr Pierre Dandjinou noted, from the UNDP perspective, that at the heart of development lay capacity-building. Capacity resides not only in individuals and public institutions, but also in societal systems as a whole. UNDP had embarked on several initiatives relating to ICT capacity-building. The Open Source Software for Development (OSS) was a programme that fostered the use of freely distributed computer programs as a way of boosting their use in developing countries, thus helping to bridge the digital divide. UNDP's global programme included four dimensions in its holistic approach to OSS: policy, capacity building, content/applications, enterprise development.

II.   Discussion and action proposals

The debates took place in a full room. The questions were numerous and of high quality and relevance. Unfortunately, due to the limited time available and great interest in the issue, not all participants had an opportunity to comment.

It was noted that the ultimate objective of capacity-building is sustainability. The process is made difficult by the rapid evolution of technologies and the lengthy duration of the learning period, as well as the divergence between institutional inertia and the demands of an ever-accelerating society adapting itself to globalization. Training and capacity-building have to be built on knowledge creation and sharing, partnerships and the best possible use of synergies.

Governments must, within a holistic vision of development, use imagination in the establishment of their ICT strategy, so as to involve individuals, public institutions and the social system as a whole. The introduction of this technology demands the adaptation, if not the transformation, of national governance and the improvement of the democratic process. It implies a political will to guarantee full liberty of information and a serious financial commitment to establishing the basic infrastructure.

Governments must decide on transparent policies, simple measures and a lasting strategy, which would include, *inter alia*:

- the setting-up of a coherent education framework;

- issuing objectives and stable regulations (including the dispute settlement process) such as to facilitate foreign private investment;

- seeking the widest possible popular participation;

- encouraging the return of the *diaspora* through provision of the necessary means for creating and increasing training opportunities for nationals, in order to compensate for the unavoidable brain drain;

- making available appropriate financing, in particular for the basic ICT infrastructure.

Against this background of the specificities of ICT capacity-building, some avenues for action were identified.

Looking ahead: proposals for action

At the heart of development is capacity-building, denoting a new approach to development cooperation, centred on the concept of strengthening national human and institutional capacity. It represents the development of the ability to manage. There are obviously several ongoing activities in the field of capacity-building for ICTs. During the debates, possible actions were identified, with the focus on the need to be concrete, realistic, not too costly and implementable in the immediate future.

The first main principle for action would be needs assessment, in particular self-needs assessment. Institutional development operations should not be foreign driven but should take full account of existing capacities and seek the broadest possible commitment of all the stakeholders. A new reflection of the issue should involve, in the recipient countries, the different players: governments, civil society and private businesses, local authorities, professional associations and existing training and capacity-building networks.

This would lead to the second proposal for action. Intergovernmental organizations, public development cooperation agencies and private sector entities engaged in providing assistance for training must rely, as much as possible, on existing structures in the recipient countries. The latter certainly need technical advice, but even more often require limited financial contributions to guarantee the sustainability of their initiative.

Thirdly, two different elements in ICT capacity development must be considered: on the one hand, the provision of the skills necessary to master the technology and its applications; and, on the other hand, the use of the technology as a tool for training in certain priority sectors such as education, health, etc… Capacity-building in this latter field should be intensified in the countries themselves, either through workshops jointly organized with national institutions or through distance-learning, with all due respect for cultural diversity.

Fourthly, the key word when it comes to launching potentially successful capacity building initiatives is "access". At the international level, no country should be denied access for political reasons, and at the national level the practitioners and users should be trained in the building and maintenance of a cyberspace, under its numerous facets, namely standards and technology, legislation and application.

Any concrete and valuable action can obviously be initiated only when funds are made available. ICTs, being mostly "brain power", can be achieved with relatively limited means by comparison with the necessarily huge investments in other development infrastructures. An increase in grants to developing countries for the development of ICTs and the strengthening of the existing public-

private partnership is necessary. Besides fruitful cooperation with bilateral agencies, as exemplified by CIDA, excellent examples of multi-stakeholders were mentioned during the debates and could be developed further, such as CISCO Systems with ITU and UNDP for the worldwide establishment of academies, the UNITAR/INTEL Series on Policy Awareness and Training in Information Technology conducted under the auspices of the UN ICT Task Force, the UNITAR/OSS/ITU information system to monitor the environment through the Internet (SISEI), and UNDP's Open Source Software centres, to name but a few.

In respect of needs assessment, it would be necessary to conduct an evaluation of ICT impacts on civil society, the public institutions and the sustainable development process in the target countries. Original methodologies and approaches must be considered, involving the national authorities of the recipient countries.

Regarding the seventh general suggestion for action, concretely, and in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, the most immediate action would be to reinforce and enlarge the existing partnerships between international organizations, governments of donor and recipient countries, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, in particular the main ICT producers and suppliers. Capacity-building seems to represent one of the most efficient tools for filling the gap in the digital divide. The World Summit on the Information society is providing an excellent opportunity to act.

ROUND TABLE No. 6

"Enabling environment (legal and regulatory framework)"

Moderator: Mr Amadeu Abril i Abril (Member of the ICANN Board of Directors)

Participants:

Government:

Mr Jean-François Soupizet

(Deputy Director of the International Affairs Unit, Directorate-General for the Information Society, European Commission)

International organizations:

Mr Renaud Sorieul (UNCITRAL)

Mr Manuel Lezertua (Council of Europe)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Abdou Abbas Sarr (Reseau Droit et Toile)

Business entities:

Mr Riad Bahsoun (TIT)

Mr Chris Kuner (Hunton & Williams)

Rapporteurs:

Joël Desaules (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Yves Courrier (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

I   Summary of presentations

Mr Jean-François Soupizet said that, in order to create an environment conducive to building the information society, the European Union had striven to liberalize and harmonize the telecommunication sector and thereby reduce costs through competition. That approach fitted in with the objectives of the Lisbon Summit, aiming to usher in a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy. By way of the "new regulatory package" adopted, the European Union had sought to strike a fair balance between the public good and excessive regulation. A large number of prior studies and consultations had been carried out in order to ensure that all stakeholders were associated in a transparent manner. While liberalization had been a reality since 2000, some difficulties still persisted: unbundling of the local loop, differences in rates, price of leased lines. The new framework had many advantages. It replaced licences with general authorizations, allowed clauses to lapse when they became obsolete, was technologically neutral, encouraged new entrants (asymmetrical regulation) and strengthened not only competition but also cooperation and pooling of competencies. Last but not least, by cutting down to five texts what was previously contained in no fewer than 22 texts, the European Union had put out a strong signal to the market, enhanced the position of consumers and established a reference framework in a dynamic environment.

Ms Nadia Hegazy explained that, in order to cope with the rapid changes in information and communication technologies, the Egyptian authorities had recently adopted significant measures, including the establishment of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and of a regulatory authority. The latter was entirely independent and had its own autonomous budget. A new telecommunication act was adopted in January 2002 regulating licences, consultations, competition, universal service and spectrum management. Liberalization of services was under way, following WTO guidelines. Since that date, there had been a considerable increase in the number of Internet and mobile telephone users, waiting lists had shrunk and more and more public access points were being opened. Four licences for basic services had been granted and new services would soon be on offer. With the free Internet model, Internet addresses could be auctioned and the bandwidth will be increased to 800 Mbps. Egypt hoped to be able to serve as a regional communications centre and attain a target of 25 million telecommunication users in 2016.

Mr Renaud Sorieul noted that, within its terms of reference, UNCITRAL had been addressing electronic data-handling issues since the 1980s and had thus acquired vast experience in that field. In the area of e-commerce, everything that had been developed in the past was still broadly applicable, but certain new realities could not be ignored. Existing tools included, for instance, private law governing international trade and including notions such as distance, dematerialization and absence of central authority. There was thus not any legal void in that connection, and the contractual framework was still applicable. This state of affairs was reflected by the two standard conventions, namely the 1996 convention on e-commerce and the 2001 convention on electronic signature. The new realities included the importance of internationality, the reduced relevance of territoriality, the fact that written vouchers were no longer available and the emergence of the consumer as a player in international trade.

Mr Manuel Lezertua stressed that provision was made in treaty law for sanctions when rules were broken. How could those arrangements be transposed to sanction criminal acts in cyberspace and enforce security. National borders were a major obstacle, and it was essential that laws be harmonized, offences be defined, and investigation conditions and mechanisms be established. Governments had failed to react quickly, so the Council of Europe had proposed a convention, adopted in Budapest in 2001. The convention identified four categories of offence relating to protection of minors, intellectual property, racism and xenophobia and cybercrimes. It also made provision for the collection of evidence, the instigation of procedures and international cooperation for investigations. That single platform made a significant contribution to network security and, being open to any States wishing to sign, could become a global instrument.

Mr Abdou Abbas Sarr expressed the opinion that cyberspace created new conditions for the exercise of law, which thus had to be adjusted. Developing countries should avoid blindly copying the laws of developed countries, which did not take account of specific local conditions. A considerable amount of training and sensitization work thus needed to be done, through educational activities and publications. The ideal aim would be a harmonized international legal framework to ensure respect for fundamental individual rights in cyberspace.

Mr Riad Bahsoun considered that, for the business world, a legal and regulatory framework was a fundamental prerequisite for the development of cyberspace. In the Arab region, because the operators were mostly public entities, they were included in the community, which had four requests. First, definition of an overall ICT development plan; second, a genuine public/private partnership; third, technically irreproachable telecommunication regulation; and, last but not least, due regard for specific regional characteristics. Concrete proposals would be submitted to the Summit in that regard.

Mr Christopher Kuner said that experience with the harmonization of laws governing cyberspace gained since the 1990s should urge caution, and that the limitations of a purely legal approach should not be underestimated. There were five lessons to be learned from past experience. Lesson 1: There is no point in drawing up regulations for which there is no market need. Lesson 2: Regulation must be based on a general need. Lesson 3: Government initiatives should be coordinated. Lesson 4: Decision-makers, law-makers and judges need to be trained. Lesson 5: There is a need to improve the linkage between the formulation and implementation of regulations, particularly at the international level.

Mr Amadeu Abril i Abril gave a brief presentation of ICANN. He highlighted that ICANN was a model example of a self-regulating organization set up to solve specific problems. Its elected Board represented all users. Governments could make their voice heard through an advisory committee. The organization also provided a framework for addressing certain disputes, notably cases of "squatting", in respect of which WIPO had the knowledge and resources to draw up material standards and ICANN, through its contractual mechanisms, applied examples of cooperation between the private sector and international organizations. By focusing on specific objectives, ICANN thus achieved optimum efficiency, thus highlighting the value of self-regulation in the field of e-commerce.

II   Discussion and action proposals

The bulk of the debate concentrated on issues of international harmonization and cooperation in the area of cyberspace law. WIPO pointed out how high the stakes were in respect of intellectual protection, both in terms of the amounts involved and the number of people concerned. Several speakers put the spotlight on undesirable or dangerous content, whether child pornography, exploitation or slavery or other criminal activities. There was a risk that lack of cooperation might create a "paradise for pirates", who could conduct their criminal activities from countries devoid of an adequate legal framework. Cooperation was thus essential for surveillance and the enforcement of sanctions and for the training of local experts. With this in mind, the drafting of an international treaty on cyberspace and the establishment of frameworks for concerted discussion appeared to be a necessity, and perhaps also the establishment of an international agency for network security, always keeping in mind, however, that the extremely fast pace of change in ICTs constituted a permanent challenge for the implementation of an effective legal system. When drawing up legislative and regulatory texts, it was essential to consult all stakeholders at all stages up to and including the application stage. Several speakers stressed the need to draw a distinction, from a legal and regulatory standpoint, between cyberspace in general and the many applications. Such applications - for instance telemedicine or tele-education - required their own specific texts.

Several comments focused on gender issues, which were fundamental in the use of technologies. The visibility of women and their participation in decision-making at all levels needed to be enhanced.

In conclusion, there might be three messages for the Summit - need for harmonization at the subregional, regional and international levels; need for training, including with a view to gender equality; strengthening the effectiveness of existing and future measures and monitoring progress through appropriate mechanisms set up for the purpose.

ROUND TABLE No. 7:

"ICT application and services"

Moderator: Ms Claudia Oglialoro (Director for Digital Divide and Multilateral Affairs, Ministry for Innovations and Technology, Italy)

Participants:

International organizations:

Mr Zhong Zhou Li (UNCTAD)

Mr Ahmed Toumi (ITSO)

Mr Michael Scholtz (WHO)

Ms Helena Molin-Valdes (ISDR)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Mr Toshihiko Hayashi (University of the Air)

Mr Gabou Gueye (SNTPT Union Network International)

Mr T. H. Chowdary (Centre for Telecom Management and Studies)

Mr Malcolm Bryant (SATELLIFE)

Rapporteurs:

Mr Ibrahim Keita (WSIS Executive Secretariat)

Ms Claudia Sarrocco (ITU)

Mr Alex Ntoko (ITU)

I Summary of presentations

Ms Claudia Oglialoro opened the session with her presentation on "e-Government: a tool for domestic policy and international cooperation". Referring to the international experience and debates, including the outcomes of all the regional conferences in preparation for WSIS, she presented e-government applications as a tool whereby policy-makers and public administrations could achieve efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in administration, foster the development of the ICT industry and help in the creation of local content.

She also presented the "e-Government for development" initiative undertaken by the Italian Government in the field, drawing attention to some of the major challenges and possible solutions. The successful implementation of e-government called for more than just the injection of ICTs into the operation of public administrations, requiring rethinking and reform in order to create genuine added value. E-government strategies, nested within e-strategies, were essential to identify priority applications suitable for the beneficiary country; local leadership that was dedicated and aware was a key prerequisite for success.

The availability of specific skills on the part of both beneficiaries and donors was also fundamental, as was the raising of awareness and sharing of experiences on e-government applications and the spreading of best practices in the field.

Security, open-source software and cybercrime were among the concerns associated with the use of e-government and should be given serious attention.

In his presentation, **Mr Zhong Zhou Li** affirmed that ICTs were providing a full range of new opportunities to our society and represented a fundamental element in the globalization of the economy. ICTs spurred productivity and competitiveness and helped the emergence of new forms of collaboration, also bringing changes to local businesses, such as tourism and services. ICTs also allowed for an increase in process outsourcing and favoured the development of new activities such as software production. For that reason, national e-strategies should be elaborated in order to raise awareness of the potential benefits of e-business and create an appropriate environment for its development.

He also insisted on the importance of building ICT capacities and skills, and stated that the contribution of ICTs to the development of e-commerce should be a key component in the WSIS action plan.

Ms Helena Molin-Valdes presented the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to build on the work of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999). Affirming the important role of ICTs in disaster reduction and especially in early warning, she said that ICTs could also help in monitoring and assessing risk, and could be a fundamental instrument for communication in isolated areas and for promoting interdisciplinary and intersectorial collaboration and exchange of scientific information.

Mr Michael Scholtz began his presentation on the role of ICTs in health by affirming that health does not call solely for an ICT application but a whole integrated system, and that it is necessary to provide open and unrestricted access to reliable health information - a global good - by making full use of ICTs in health system development. He also stressed the need to train and educate health workers, researchers and policy-makers on how to make the best use of ICTs in health.

Mr Ahmed Toumi presented an initiative aimed at accelerating the build-up of a broadband infrastructure based on satellite technology. The proposal suggested a set of actions in the area of frequency and orbital slot resources, standardization and regulatory measures related to satellite services, and stressed the need for the inclusion of that issue in the work and actions of WSIS, as well as the active participation of ITU in deploying those activities between the first and second sessions of the Summit.

Mr Toshihiko Hayashi introduced the University of the Air and explained the potential benefits of e-learning, underlining also the need to reshape the traditional university model to adapt it to the new needs of distance and electronic teaching. E-learning could be a very poor substitute for conventional education if it was not supported by appropriate technology and complemented with in-person classes, video recordings and meeting points throughout the country.

Mr Gabou Gueye pointed out the importance of ICTs for sustainable development and peace. He also supported the creation of new applications that could benefit people from developing countries and help them to enter the global information society. Among the main points for discussion, the speaker underlined the need to combat illiteracy and the spread of pornography. He mentioned the challenges that ICTs and globalization were presenting to trade unions, pointing to the role that unions had to play in ensuring that that revolution would serve the general interest and contribute to the well-being of men and women on all continents.

Mr T. H. Chowdary emphasized that the main characteristics of the Internet had to be accessibility, reliability and affordability, as information and knowledge were a fundamental source of wealth, providing enrichment and empowerment. He also stressed the importance of broadband for the development of new applications, particularly education, and pointed out that a poor infrastructure would prevent the population from exploiting that new potential. The digital divide was only the latest among a series of divides affecting our society, but ICT applications could help in bridging those divides and could bring developing economies into an "earning and learning" logic. Among the other possible problems for ICT development, he mentioned the cost of connectivity, computer equipment and proprietary software, the lack of suitable content and local language content, infrastructure shortcomings in remote areas and the inadequacy of support services such as electricity.

Mr Malcolm Bryant focused his presentation on the potential benefits of employing PDA devices for e-health services in developing countries, especially for remote areas. Such a technology could be a valid substitute for personal computers, allowing a higher degree of mobility and flexibility and thereby helping students and physicians in their tasks. The PDA could be powered by batteries or even solar panels, overcoming the power supply problems that were common in those countries. Concerns regarding the use of ICTs in the health sector were also referred to by the speaker, in particular where the special need for privacy, data protection and secure communications were concerned. The price of such devices was lower than that of normal computers, but still too high for developing countries. The industry should be called upon to reduce its prices if that technology was to prove its full potential in bridging the digital divide.

Discussion and action proposals

During the debate it was stressed that infrastructure is a fundamental element to enable the development of applications, as there could be no global information infrastructure without a global delivery platform.

In the field of e-education, digital rights management and copyright are still problems, limiting access to information. The issue of licensing costs and the need to develop open-source software was also mentioned, together with the need for tailored solutions to meet the diverse need of users through the development of appropriate content and software programmes.

It was also pointed out that applications aimed at the development of human resources should be created, and that developing countries must be able to contribute actively to the elaboration of content. This applies to medical reviews, to which many countries may be able to have access but not contribute, with the consequence that most of the content is not adapted to local conditions.

The issue of standards was raised by several speakers in regard to the cost savings that could be gained from their harmonization, and as vectors of an application-enabling broadband access. Frequency assignment for wireless and satellite-based communication was also discussed.

For most of these issues, it was felt that ongoing initiatives, some of which are very relevant, should be revamped instead of starting again from scratch. The human resource issues, such as teaching in universities in different subjects, were considered crucial, along with the access and infrastructure that would help the people and communities to benefit from all the applications that ICTs can offer.

Conclusions and action points

Several ideas for action came out of the discussion. They principally had to do with:

–   Promoting e-government as a tool to provide easily accessible public services and improve the participation of citizens in the local administration;

–   Raising awareness of the importance of ICT applications for development at the highest political level;

–   Reducing the cost of access to ICT applications, for example by encouraging the use of open-source software;

–   Encouraging governments to provide funding for application and content development;

–   Establishing widespread public Internet access points to foster access to ICT services;

–   Supporting the creation of national e-business strategies;

–   Enhancing and supporting the improvement of health information, with due regard for the need for connectivity at low cost, open standards and software;

–   Elaborating new teaching models and tools to improve e-learning;

–   Promoting handheld computers as a potential solution for developing countries;

–   Developing content adapted to local needs and languages;

–   Developing a network for the dissemination of scientific knowledge for risk management and early warning of natural disasters;

–   Taking into consideration the need to develop broadband services that will enable a further improvement of ICT applications.

In conclusion, a number of ICT applications have the potential to fill in the divides between developed and developing countries. However, as illustrated throughout the debate, their widespread use will depend on many prerequisites, the achievement of which calls for a strong political and financial commitment at both the national and international levels.

The last word, from India, conveyed a message of hope that had a positive influence on our round table, so we hope that it will in turn give the same serenity to the remainder of our work. Om! shantih shantih shantih (Peace on earth, peace on the seas, peace in the skies).

ROUND TABLE No. 8:

"The role of the different stakeholders in the information society"

Moderator: Ms María Cattaui (Secretary-General, ICC)

Participants:

Government:

Ms Elizabeth Gomes (Adviser to the President, National Telecommunications Agency - ANATEL, Brazil)

International organizations:

Mr Bruno Lanvin (World Bank)

Mr Roberto Zachmann (ILO)

Ms Thérèse Gestaut (United Nations)

NGOs and civil society entities:

Ms Rinalia Abdul Rahim (GKP)

Mr Michael Warner (ODI)

Business entities:

Mr Robert Rogers (GIIC)

(read by Mr Eduardo Gonçalves, Camara-e.net)

Rapporteurs:

Ms Ayesha Hassan (ICC)

Mr Manuel Zaragoza (ITU)

I.   Summary of presentations

The Moderator, **Maria Livanos Cattaui,** opened the Round Table by stating that there had been equally strong participation from all players in the promotion of ICTs, as well as in the preparatory process for the Summit. Noting the importance of drawing on the strengths of each stakeholder, she posed a series of questions including:

*   Is it realistic to have enhanced partnerships around the world?

*   How can governments stimulate contributions from business and civil society?

*   Do we need to define special responsibilities for business and civil society, given the financial constraints currently facing governments?

*   How can we maximize the experiences of IGOs in engaging stakeholders most effectively in ICT development?

*   What can civil society contribute?

*   What will make business take the risk of investment?

Ms Thérèse Gastaut emphasized the role and work of the United Nations in the context of the information society, as well as its cooperation with ITU. Two United Nations departments were directly involved: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Information. She drew particular attention to three functions of the United Nations and its Department of Information regarding the information society:

1)   Promoting the information society (Millennium Declaration, creation of the UN ICT Task Force, etc.);

2)   Highlighting the role of the media, which is essential in the information society;

3)   Contributing to pluralism and multilingualism and to multicultural environments.

She concluded that the objective of the information society must be a better world for all; that the media must play an active role in the information society; and that the information society must be open and tolerant.

The **Moderator** called on both the conventional and electronic media, which were not mere observers but key players, to contribute towards solutions for the promotion of the information society.

Mr Bruno Lanvin referred to the widely-noted phenomenon of "Summit fatigue", observing that part of the popularity of ICTs for development came from its being a unique area in which action had preceded talk. One of the major merits of the Summit lay in its bringing stakeholders together. However, that in itself was not enough: it must also bring together their experiences. He presented figures and structures which the World Bank had used effectively in support of ICTs for development, including loans, investments and grants, and emphasized that partnerships were the only way to effectively pursue ICT development, since ICTs did not constitute a sector, but rather crossed all sectors. All stakeholders needed to accept new responsibilities, and, referring to the initial questions posed by the Moderator, he recommended that the best way to stimulate the values of the information society was to identify champions for each value. He summarized the keys to ICT development as "ABCDE": A = access, B = basic skills, C = content, D = desire to reform, and E = engagement of civil society.

Ms Rinalia Abdul Rahim explained that Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) served as a policy bridge to initiatives, feeding back to grass-roots projects on a variety of issues including youth, gender and indigenous communities, to name but a few. Highlighting the way in which the functions of partners overlapped, she said that it was very important not to box the perceived expertise or contributions of any of the partners, and to learn from the experience of the partnerships. Further highlighting the role of the government in creating an enabling environment, she pointed to technical expertise, business acumen and market development as being among the functions that business brings to ICT and development partnerships.

Ms Elizabeth Gomes addressed the role of the government in building ICTs, using Brazil's experience to illustrate the fact that governments establish infrastructures for the Internet and networks and provide solutions to problems that cannot be solved by market forces alone. In Brazil, the Government had developed many network services in the areas of education and health, as well as services for citizens such as e-voting and tax payment via the Web. She noted that governments, as champions of ICTs, played an important leadership role by being major providers and users of ICTs.

Mr Eduardo Gonçalves of Camara-e.net made a presentation on behalf of Roger Roberts of the Global Information and Infrastructure Commission (GIIC). He stressed that without risk-taking and investment there could be no basis for a global information society. If speeding the world towards an information society was a Summit goal, then the role of private investment must be recognized as being paramount. He presented figures to illustrate the status of network access, Internet access and the cost and capability of ICTs and thereby to demonstrate the discrepancies that exist between high-income nations and less developed countries. Overcoming this unbalanced situation should be a goal of the information society. To maximize its effectiveness, the Summit must focus on the foundations of a worldwide information society and recognize that investment in ICTs is an essential force for economic growth and social development. Policy frameworks that are conducive to private investment and favour healthy competition are essential.

Mr Roberto Zachmann asked where the "social" side of the information society was to be found, suggesting that the Summit should include a discussion on ICTs and the way in which we work, given that ICTs have had a major impact on the world's workers. He called for recognition of the fact that what we are actually seeing is an amplification of existing divides brought about by technological change. The information society is about people, not phones and computers, although such equipment has changed the basic ways in which people work. He reminded the meeting that enterprises employ, and jobs reduce poverty.

The **Moderator** highlighted the danger of the information society becoming an amplification of the existing divide, indicating further that we must start using clear language when talking about the information society. Sometimes the acronyms, abbreviations and exotic theories prevented a clear understanding of what the information society was about.

Mr Michael Warner spoke about the multisector partnership of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and pointed to key success factors. It was important to maximize all the obvious and hidden competencies of each partner: for example, the role of business in human resources development may not be readily apparent, but should be fully utilized.

There were three stages in building partnerships: first, exploration; second, maintenance; and third, building the relationships. Partnerships need to add value over other alternatives for structuring solutions to problems on given issues. He highlighted three success factors in evaluating partnerships:

a)   Draw upon core competencies;

b)   Align with government and ICT sectors;

c)   Apply interest-based negotiations.

He identified the following areas requiring caution when forming partnerships for ICT development:

a)   Do not rush into partnerships;

b)   Do not become overly dependent on facilitators in a partnership;

c)   Assume that the partnership will evolve or end and not exist forever.

Discussion and action proposals

The **Moderator** guided a vibrant exchange between the panelists and audience on a vast number of issues, including success stories following privatization and competition and positive and negative lessons learnt from partnership experiences.

Appropriate mechanisms must be put in place at both the national and international levels to allow the different groups of stakeholders to assume their respective responsibilities.

Civil society and the private sector were two main pillars of the information society. All stakeholders should put in place appropriate mechanisms to develop innovative associations between those two players.

Private sector resources and investment were essential for the development of the information society. All stakeholders must cooperate in putting in place appropriate incentives for the generation of investment.

She then summarized the substantive outcomes of the session, observing that a powerful and desirable outcome of the Summit would be for countries to commit to developing their own national ICT strategies in close consultation with their respective partners - business and civil society - with a view to creating the necessary policy, legal and regulatory environment to attract investment in ICTs and foster entrepreneurship. The degree to which such commitments were secured should be evaluated and measured at the time of the Summit, and thereafter on an ongoing basis.

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