

**UNICEF Statement at PrepCom-1 for
The World Summit on the Information Society.
(GENEVA 1-5 July 2002)**

We believe that a major focus of attention in the forthcoming summit must be on "turning challenges into opportunities". There is no doubt that the information revolution brings enormous welcome opportunities for the provision of useful knowledge and life skills such as HIV/AIDS protection - to this end we very much welcome the emphasis on promoting access of all the world's inhabitants to information, knowledge and communication technologies for development. We also very strongly support the need to fully harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the UN Millennium declaration.

In order to achieve full access, clearly many challenges must be overcome. The cost of access remains a dream for half of the World's population living on less than two dollars a day.

Whilst new information technology can be an immensely powerful educational asset an essential pre-requisite for its effective use is also a good quality basic education for all. With more than 110 million children currently not completing primary education this also represents a major challenge to be overcome. The better children are educated the better use they are able to make of information technology.

The reduction of disparities, discrimination and exclusion also is a challenge to be overcome in order to boost access to information technology.

The UN Special Session on Children concluded in May approved an outcome document "A World fit for Children" that inter-alia gave emphasis to the promotion of access by all to a full range of information and services to promote child survival, development, protection and participation.

Indeed, **paragraph 40.18** emphasises the need to harness the rapidly evolving information and communication technologies to support education at an affordable cost, including open and distance education while reducing inequality in access and quality.

UNICEF wants also to draw attention to:

Paragraph 44.19 of the UNSS outcome document which "encourages measures to protect children from violent or harmful web sites, computer programmes and games that negatively influence the psychological development of children, taking into account the responsibilities of the family, parents, legal guardians and caregivers".

Paragraph 44.47: "take necessary measures, including through enhanced cooperation between governments, intergovernmental organizations to combat the criminal use of information technologies, including the Internet, for purposes of the sale of children, for child prostitution, child pornography, child sex tourism, paedophilia and other forms of violence and abuse against children and adolescents".