

Visions of the Information Society

A series of conferences
presented by the
International Telecommunication Union

18-25 February 2003, Geneva, Switzerland

**Bringing together key thinkers in the
information society from across the world**

KEY THEMES

- **Knowledge-driven economies**
- **Public/private partnerships**
- **Digital rights management**
- **Access and affordability**
- **Network security**
- **Education and learning**

The dramatic development of information and communication technologies, or ICTs, has revolutionized the way people work, interact and conduct their daily lives. It has transformed the global economy and heralded a new and dynamic 'information society'. But what does living in the information society really mean? Increased security risks? Access to information for all? What are the benefits? What are the risks? This series of conferences zooms in on a number of key considerations for the information age. So join us for this 6-part 'Visions' event and wake up to the opportunities and challenges of the global information society.

Conferences to coincide with PrepCom-2 of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva, 17-28 February 2003

Date and Time	Discussion Topic	Key Speaker
Tues 18 February 2003 13h45	<i>The nature of the information society: A developed world perspective</i>	Professor Robin Mansell, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)
Wed 19 February 2003 13h45	<i>The nature of the information society: A developing world perspective</i>	Madanmohan Rao, Consultant (India)
Thur 20 February 2003 13h45	<i>Fostering globally accessible and affordable ICTs</i>	Professor Toshihiko Hayashi, University of the Air (Japan)
Fri 21 February 2003 13h45	<i>Information wants to be free</i>	Bruce Girard, Consultant (Netherlands)
Mon 24 February 2003 13h45	<i>Network security: Protecting our critical infrastructures</i>	Professor Sy Goodman, Georgia Institute of Technology (USA)
Tues 25 February 2003 13h45	<i>ICTs for education and building human capital</i>	Frances Cairncross, Senior Editor, The Economist (UK)

Participation is limited to WSIS PrepCom-2 participants (for details, visit <http://www.itu.int/wsisis>)

CD-ROM and brochure to be published in June 2003
will include the six full-length papers and background resources on the information society

www.itu.int/visions

Visions of the Information Society

Understanding the context:

Two background sessions on the nature of the information society

As an instrument, affordable and usable ICTs can transform the way societies work, entertain, study, govern and live – at the individual, organizational, vocational and national levels. As an industry, ICTs constitute a major growing economic sector covering hardware, software, telecom and consulting services. Although a great tool for development, ICTs represent at the same time a risk for many that do not have the possibility to participate in the information revolution and fully reap the benefits of the information society. The first session charts the use and potential of ICTs in developing nations, using a comparative framework. The second session examines information society developments primarily from an industrialized country perspective. It will consider the key determinants of a 'knowledge-driven economy', diffusion pathways for ICTs, policy and regulatory priorities, and the role of public/private partnerships for mobilizing the information society.

Streamlining the issues:

Four targeted sessions on specific themes

Session #1: Fostering globally accessible and affordable ICTs

Access to information and knowledge is primarily determined by three elements: connectivity, capability and content. Many lack connectivity, and this is still considered the biggest challenge to the development of the information society. This session will discuss the means by which to enhance access to global information networks and in so doing, it will consider issues such as sustainability, pricing strategies and governance.

Session #2: Network security: Protecting our critical infrastructures

As telecommunication networks expand and become increasingly necessary social infrastructures, their vulnerability to attack and interception becomes more acute. This session will discuss the importance of securing our global critical infrastructures, including the legal and policy frameworks that facilitate network integrity and the various strategic defence options available. The advantages of international cooperation in its various forms will also be considered.

Session #3: Information wants to be free

In order to foster the creation of a global information society, it is essential to promote open access to networks for service and information suppliers, and to protect the plurality of opinions. This session will examine how the circulation of information and knowledge can be enhanced with the use of ICTs, through mechanisms such as data protection, privacy safeguards and digital rights management.

Session #4: ICTs for education and building human capital

This session will address the impact of ICTs on access to education and skills development. It will consider human capacity building in schools and universities and the use of ICTs for training in local initiatives and large corporations. The discussion will include an analysis of the nature of distance education, the benefits and costs of ICTs for education, and the technological improvements that might enhance the positive impact of ICTs on education.