eminent 2003

Position paper to the Preparatory Commission of WSIS 2003

Education in developing countries in the light of the growing need to keep up with the pace of the information and knowledge based society.

The EMINENT conference held in Geneva on October 9 and 10, 2003, wishes to express its considerations about the Draft Plan of Action of PrepCom 3, in particular in the light of the urgent need to make Education in developing countries more inclusive and equitable. Our critique concerns the following goals:

➢ All primary [2015], secondary schools [2010] all universities [2005] and scientific research centres [2005] to be ICT connected.
➢ All primary and secondary school curricula [2006] to be revised to meet the challenges of the Information Society.

We acknowledge the fact that these targets are a pragmatic synthesis of a complicated consultative process yet we strongly agree that these targets are ambitious even for industrialized countries and that they are unrealistic in the context of developing countries. We suggest that the targets be reformulated by addressing the core question of what constitutes desirable achievements.
Moreover, we agreed that the targets have underlying assumptions about sustainability, access and availability of resources that need to be clarified.
Realistic educational goals need to point to action lines targeting learner-centeredness, attitudes and content rather than to the connectivity issue.

We consider the following statements as our common effort to contribute to a better understanding of ICT and education in developing countries:

- Policy matters. Any project experience involving ICT only works when there's a clear link to a solid policy framework.
- Where policies are missing, there should be broad consensus on priority areas of adoption of ICT in Education.
- There are clear signs of willingness for productive adoption of ICT in Education at the school level, and clear evidence of benefits from ICT for the communities.
- There must be a clear vision about goals and priority targets such as meaningful content, and general developmental aspects.
- Clear and solid strategies are a starting point. Technical solutions follow on from those.
- Countries can start preparing students for the information society even without nationwide access to ICTs. The challenges brought about by ICTs can trigger educational reforms or initiate changes in learning cultures.
- For the successful adoption of ICTs in education, pre-conditions concerning educational context and attitudes need to be identified.
- The move from project-based, short-term initiatives to a more systemic approach that takes into account general educational reforms and sustainability is an issue.

No society based on information and knowledge can afford to ignore the role of education.
For these reasons, it is our conviction that education should be at the centre of discussions during the World Summit of the Information Society WSIS 2003.

Link to the Eminent website: http://eminent.eun.org