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**PrepCom3**  
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**Remarks by the Secretary-General of the ITU and Chairman of  
HLSOC**

**OPENING ADDRESS**

Seven years ago, the Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU recognized the need for the world community to address the emerging challenges of the Information Society and to ensure that all countries have the chance to share in its benefits.

Today, we are less than three months away from the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

We have traveled a long road to get to this point. Tens of thousands of delegates have attended meetings in every region of the world to debate the issues of the Information Society and to agree on answers and solutions. At the first PrepCom, we set the framework and rules for this process. At PrepCom 2, we established the basis for the Declaration of Principles and Action Plan to be adopted at the Geneva phase.

However, here in Geneva, surrounded by the beautiful mountains of the Alps and Jura, we are reminded of a reality that every mountain climber knows: the last part of the climb is the steepest and the most difficult.

The challenges and risks are enormous. The world has changed since the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference launched this process in 1998. There are some that believe that multilateral institutions and processes are no longer able to address global problems. The record of world summits in the United Nations is mixed. And the United Nations itself has come under attack, both physically and figuratively.

The Information Society has evolved as well. The bright promise of the Internet has been clouded by failed companies and lack of agreement on basic principles for cyberspace. We read every day of court battles over the rights to use and share music and information in cyberspace. The dishonest clog our information networks with spam and other unpleasant messages. The true promise of mobile technologies awaits realization.

More fundamentally, the benefits of the Information Society are not being shared. There are many success stories and global networks have created the possibility for small enterprises in remote areas to join the international marketplace. For those with the proper tools, modern networks can truly place the world at anyone's fingertips.

Mobile phones have been a great success in the developing world. However, the gaps still persist. The promise of broadband is only a thin trickle in most parts of the world. The ability to make full use of the wide range of e-applications still relies on the establishment of basic networks of communications. Such networks are lacking in rural and remote areas. In a world where the security of individual citizens is under threat, globally-linked networks raise new concerns about privacy and fundamental freedoms.

The ITU is proud to be organizing the World Summit on the Information Society. We are the oldest intergovernmental organization and represent the longest standing global commitment to bringing nations and citizens together through communication. In our early days in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main focus of the ITU was only on technical concerns by experts, such as promoting global standards so that communications equipment would work throughout the world. However, today, few would disagree any longer that communication networks are a vital part of national and international infrastructures and thus a key part of domestic development strategies. In recognition of that reality, over the past decades the ITU has strengthened its commitment to development and to assisting its member states to join the network.

The importance of communications and access to networks is no longer just a technical matter, but a fundamental policy concern for every nation and a key to meeting the Millennium Declaration Goals.

I believe that the Summit can be considered successful if it can achieve three main objectives:

First, to **raise awareness among political leaders**, at the highest level, of the implications of the information society

To this purpose, the Summit will help in the definition of a common vision of the information society based on principles such as universality, ubiquity, inclusiveness and equity, respecting human rights and fundamental freedom. More than 40 heads of states have already announced their participation in the summit. I am sure we will achieve the first objective.

Secondly, to get their firm commitment to **tackle the injustice of the digital divide**.

The Summit draft declaration of principles and action plan already draw an information society where knowledge and information constitute the fundamental sources of well being and progress. They embrace the concept that the information society is one in which ICT networks, equitable access to information and effective communication can help people achieve their potential, promote sustainable economic and social development, and improve the quality of life for all.

These principles should then be transformed into concrete actions and projects, which will be carried out by the different stakeholders at the national, regional or international level.

Thirdly, to gain their political commitment to **develop new legal and policy frameworks**, appropriate to cyberspace.

By a "policy framework for cyberspace" I mean a shared understanding between different stakeholders on the particular challenges presented by the imminent

arrival of a world in which computers and communications are everywhere around us, in order to determine the best and most effective means to extend the framework and rules that we apply in the non-virtual, "real" world to the virtual world of cyberspace.

Finally, we cannot overlook the need to back our commitments with financial and human resources. In this year alone, many billions will be spent by governments and industry combating unlawful use of the Internet and curbing the cancerous growth of spam mail. We must ensure that similar financial backing is provided to the Action Plan and to efforts to expand the network.

The Summit is in sight. With hard work over the next two weeks, I am certain that we will get to the top of the mountain together.

Thank you