

**World Summit on the Information Society
Intersessional Meeting Paris 18 July 2003**

Address of Neil Anderson, Union Network International

Madam Chairperson, I represent the Global Union Federations and Union Network International. We have 15 million members who are workers in 150 countries including in the IT, Telecom, Media and postal Industries.

We are as excited about the opportunities presented by ICT's as all the delegates here and we agree we need to channel their benefits for all. But this cannot happen without proper employment strategies and addressing the issues for the workers who will be charged with making this happen.

ICT's offer great opportunities. They also present great challenges. Rich countries have the resources to train populations for more productive and enriching work, if they have the political will to do so. Poor countries, even the most progressive ones, often lack the resources to do so. Rich countries have the resources to provide the necessary safety nets that ease the adjustment to new technologies when there is the political will to do so. Poor countries do not have this luxury.

We regret that this assembly seems to have forgotten that the use of ICT's can expand existing digital divides and inequalities. We regret that this assembly has forgotten that workers are the ones that bear the brunt of structural change brought about by ICT's. It is with great sadness that we observe that few are willing to stand for International Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as a mechanism to ensure that ICT's will, in reality, lead to fairer and productive societies.

We note that the Australian Government is supporting the inclusion of some observers comments in Article 40 of the Action Plan and we all urge all Governments to support this initiative. We have to stress that the clauses on Human Rights in the Declaration do not adequately cover Workers Rights. Only ILO Principles and Standards do this. Article 40 offers one opportunity to redress this serious omission and to provide mechanisms to ensure that workers who are an integral part of the Information Society have their needs and concerns met.

Workers need basic protections. This is particularly so seeing that there are so many new forms of work in the Information Society.

We also have serious concerns that the issue of workers health and safety is not addressed either in the Declaration or the Action Plan. We all know that ICT's present health risks for workers, users and the general public. These risks are real and numerous and they range from Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS) to Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR). This issue needs to be addressed.

Finally we would like to reaffirm our support for the Swiss Government proposal for Article 51 of the draft Declaration. It is essential that we defend here media independence and pluralism, to stress the importance of public services in the audiovisual sector and the necessity to introduce specific law aimed to limit media concentration.

Madame Chair and delegates thank you for your attention.