WSIS ASIA - PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
TOKYO, 13 – 15 JANUARY 2003

Speech by His Excellency Mr Adama Samassékou,
President of the WSIS Preparatory Committee,
President of the African Academy of Languages,
former Minister of Education of Mali

Tokyo, 14 January 2003

Mr Chairman of the Conference,

Honorable Ministers,

Mr. Secretary General of ITU,

Mr. Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

Distinguished Representatives of Intergovernmental Organisation, Private Sector and Civil Society,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin, Mr Chairman of the Conference, by saying how happy I am indeed to be in Tokyo to take part in the Asia - Pacific Regional Conference to prepare for the World Summit on the Information Society, which, as you know, is to be held this coming December in Geneva and in 2005 in Tunis.

I would like to express my warmest thanks both to you, Mr Chairman, and to the Government of Japan for the quality of the hospitality, for making our stay a comfortable one and for providing us with excellent working conditions.

I am convinced that, thanks to the organizational efforts made by the Government of Japan and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), this third regional conference will enable the countries of Asia and of the Pacific region, after those of Africa and Europe, to elaborate a shared vision of the information society and contribute to the preparation and ultimate success of our World Summit.

This is for me a very important conference, which, in addition to defining the priorities and concerns of the Asia and Pacific region, should serve to advance the debate on the substantive issues to be addressed by the Summit – a debate that will be at the core of the second PrepCom, scheduled, as you know, to be held in Geneva between 17 and 28 February 2003.

Let me remind you also that I am expecting from each of the regional conferences a high-quality contribution to the elaboration of the basic documents that will be submitted to the Summit: the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. We hope to develop together the first version of those documents at the forthcoming PrepCom.

To advance that work, in the coming days, I will propose to the participants of PrepCom-2 an informal document, a Non Paper, with some orientation lines concerning the Principles and the Actions. This set of orientations could serve as the starting point of the discussions towards the first version of the Draft of Declaration and Action Plan.

This document takes in consideration the results of the Informal Meeting held last September in Geneva, continuing the work of Subcommittee 2 of PrepCom-1, as well as the contributions received by the Executive Secretariat, the outcomes of the African Regional Conference of Bamako and Pan-European Regional Conference in Bucharest.

This is a "work in progress Paper" which will be developed on the basis of the outcome of this Asia - Pacific Regional Conference and of the Regional Conference of Latin-America and Caribbean countries, which will be held from the 29 to 31 January in the Dominican Republic.

That's the reason I would like to encourage you to take into consideration when you elaborate the Tokyo Declaration the results of the different steps in the preparatory process of the Summit.

Indeed, I would like to see the Regional Conferences not only promoting their specificities but also taking into account what each region can agree on, regarding our common problems.

I sincerely hope that the negotiations at the second PrepCom will be undertaken in this spirit of complementary in order to be able to submit to the Heads of States and Governments, in December, an Agenda, a Declaration of Principles and an Action Plan, which have been elaborated in a consensual manner and which take into account the major concerns expressed by the whole international community, in tackling the vital issues and challenges of the Information Society.

Those vital **issues,**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

are well known. If I were to sum them up, then I would say that it has to do with:

- turning the digital divide into **digital opportunities**, particularly for the vast majority of people living in the South, mainly using South-South-North cooperation.

- moving more rapidly towards the Millennium objectives for sustainable development;

- cultivating cultural and linguistic diversity, which is the wealth of peoples and a global public good *par excellence*.

However, the **challenges** confronting us are enormous. If we wish to succeed, in Geneva this year and in Tunis in 2005, we will have to:

- first, mitigate - if not entirely dispel - the great mistrust that exists between the stakeholders at this Summit and try to make Governments, Private Sector, Civil Society and Intergovernmental Organisations work together in a complementary way in order to get a real consensus concerning the solutions we have to find regarding the majors problems of the Information Society.

- second, intelligently coordinate the two phases of the Summit, in terms of objectives and in terms of content. While Geneva is the key to establishing the credibility of the Summit, it is at Tunis that a broader perspective will be needed in order to consolidate the commitments undertaken by the World Summit on the Information Society;

- and third, make this Summit the starting point for a new era in international relations, in which the ideology of competition is progressively replaced by an universal ideology of solidarity.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For all these reasons, I use to say that our Summit is a special one.

It is special because, although an intergovernmental Summit, it is open to all the other stakeholders of the Information Society: the Private Sector, Intergovernmental Organizations and Civil Society, which have been fully integrated into the preparatory work and into the Summit itself.

Resolution A/56/183, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2001, was imbued with the same open spirit of bringing together all the stakeholders of the information society and involving them in the preparatory work and in the Summit itself. The same principle was emphasized in resolution A/57/529/Add.3 on the World Summit on the Information Society, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 2002.

The Summit is also special because, as already mentioned, it is organized in two phases. Such a procedure is unusual in the United Nations, since what we have here is not a main event and then a follow-up Summit, but a true two-part Summit which could well be a productive one, since the Summit preparatory process is a genuine two-phase process that gives all stakeholders time for reflection and for ongoing change.

This is perhaps the right time for me to share with you my vision of how to coordinate the two phases of the Summit.

This coordination involves three steps.

– First, what I would term a positive staging of the Summit's issues and its intellectual (and not merely technical) credentials. This would call for the organization, by UNESCO, of an international colloquium, bringing together eminent intellectuals (e.g. Nobel prize-winners, academics, leading thinkers..), who have an interest in the Information Society and a vision to share. The colloquium would consider the lay-term issues associated with the challenges of the digital revolution.

– Second, formalize the initial responses to the appeal made to the global collective awareness, through the Geneva phase with a **Declaration of Principles** and a **Plan of Action** that will frame the hopes raised by the concept of this Summit within an appropriate perspective.

–   Third, use the Tunis phase not only to consolidate this drawing into perspective, but also, and above all, to broaden our scope for reflection and action through long-term commitments which could be expressed in a **Charter of Ethical Conduct**, to be proposed to States and to other major stakeholders of the information society.

I believe that such a three-step approach would serve to intelligently coordinate the two phases of our Summit so as to maximize its synergies and lend it overall coherence.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have already explained why I consider the World Summit on the Information Society to be a special Summit, but there is yet another reason: this is the first United Nations Summit, and indeed the first Summit of any kind, to deal with the Information Society – a complex subject that involves a host of subsidiary subjects, each of equal importance in their own right.

This Summit could be named the "Summit of Summits", because on its agenda we have global political questions concerning the whole human society. In my mind it is the prelude to a new generation of Summits. Indeed, I think that it is not only a personal wish but a real necessity, in this world becoming more and more complex and global, to take a big step in the field of international relations and pass from the actual UN Conferences about specific questions of development to a new kind of Summits where the highest Authorities of all Member States are invited to discuss the challenging questions of the future society on our planet. Such Summits could be held each two years and based on the Reports of the majors Stakeholders of the Information Society with the objectives to develop a new Project of society based on the Principles of Solidarity and Sharing.

The first phase of the Summit could, with the adoption of the Declaration of Principles and Action Plan of Geneva, initiate this approach, and the second phase, with the Charter of Tunis could develop the ethical conduct of this new perspective in international relationships.

Let us therefore work together to ensure that this first Summit of the third Millennium will help to transform the Information Society, which was

born of the digital revolution, into a society of human communication, where information and knowledge are shared; a society that will be a precursor to a new global dialogue for peace and to a new type of international communication based on more listening, sharing and active solidarity between the countries and between the citizens of this world.

This Summit will lay the cornerstone of a new, shared concept for all of humanity: the **Universal Ideology of Solidarity**.

That is my profound conviction, and the vision for this Summit that I wanted to share with you today.

I wish you every success for the work of the Asia – Pacific preparatory Regional Conference for the World Summit on Information Society.

Thank you for your attention.