

## **Report to Prepcom-3 on the ITU/Republic of Korea WSIS Thematic Meeting on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide**

To be presented by Mr Tae-Yul CHO, Ambassador of the Korean Permanent Mission to the United Nation (UN) Secretariat and International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland, 19 September 2005, during the opening session of PrepCom-3

It is my pleasure to report on behalf of the government of the Republic of Korea and ITU on the WSIS Thematic Meeting on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide.

The Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Paragraph 17) calls for “digital solidarity”; that is, for a strong commitment among all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to realize the agreed objective of “bridging the digital divide and ensuring harmonious, fair and equitable development for all.” To this end, the Geneva Plan of Action, in paragraph 8.b, encourages governments to cooperate with the private sector and civil society in the formation of at least one functioning public/private partnership or multi-sector partnership by the end of 2005.

As part of this commitment to strengthening cooperation for bridging the digital divide, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication of the Republic of Korea (MIC) and the Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion (KADO), hosted a **WSIS Thematic Meeting on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide**, which took place on 23 and 24 June of this year in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

This thematic meeting was the second one organized under the umbrella of the Digital Bridges Initiative, which is itself a multi-stakeholder partnership initiative established in 2004 between ITU and MIC of Korea to promote the achievement of goals set at WSIS, particularly those dealing with measuring and bridging the digital divide.

As such, this Thematic Meeting pursued a dual goal.

- First, to discuss the factors that can hinder or contribute to the success of partnerships focused on the use of ICTs for development; and
- Second, to promote the development of a composite Digital Opportunity Index to measure the digital divide, in accordance to the mandate of the WSIS Plan of Action (paragraph 28).

Some 125 participants from 36 countries, including representatives of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, recognized the importance of trust and equality of rights and obligations among partners as key attributes of successful partnerships. The experiences of multi-stakeholder partnership projects in fourteen countries were presented, covering America, Europe, Africa and Asia. These experiences underscored the difficulty of integrating the vision of diverse stakeholders, given their different backgrounds, but they emphasized that, if successful, partnership can achieve much more than individual stakeholders can achieve alone. Sharing information and reconciling differences between partners can be challenging, but these activities are necessary to attain fruitful partnership cooperation.

The second area of focus of the conference was on measuring and monitoring the digital divide. ITU presented a background paper which

introduced a proposed methodology for the development of a composite Digital Opportunity Index or DOI. This is based on the core set of ICT indicators agreed upon last February by the international organizations and national statistical agencies comprising the “Partnership for Measuring ICT for Development”. The methodology has been tested on 40 economies and its initial results will be presented again for discussion to a panel of experts and other WSIS stakeholders in a parallel event during PrepCom-3, on Thursday 23 September, starting at 13.30 in Room 9. We would welcome all interested parties to that event.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Michael Reed of the United Nations University and his report of the meeting, which is posted on the WSIS website, stresses the need for comparable measurements “to guide policy and to identify opportunities in the developing world”. It also notes that achieving success in closing the digital gap depends on cooperation and partnership between stakeholders.

“Connect the World”, an initiative launched by ITU’s Secretary-General, Yoshio Utsumi, in June of this year and supported by more than 20 founding partners, including KADO, provides an instrumental platform for the establishment of new partnerships and the achievement of WSIS commitments by 2015. As a member of this and many other partnership projects for development, Korea and ITU will continue their commitment towards these goals.

Thank you.