

**Proposals to the Chair of the WSIS Group of Friends of the Chair (GFC)
from the five United Nations Regional Commissions**

The regional dimension and preparatory mechanisms are an important contribution to the preparatory process for WSIS Tunis, 2005. In the name of the United Nations Regional Commissions – Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) – we would like to address the following issues as input to the drafting process of the Group of Friends of the Chair of WSIS Tunis:

1. Political Chapeau

The United Nations Regional Commissions are deeply committed to the WSIS and are assisting their member States with the relevant issues required by the process. Several times during the WSIS process, it has been shown that the regional dimension was essential for the success of the Summit process and to improve its functionality. The five regional preparatory conferences were organized by the UN Regional Commissions in cooperation with our member States and made up the basis of what became the WSIS Geneva documents.

The UN Regional Commissions provide a valuable mechanism to support internationally agreed objectives and goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular by achieving a knowledge-based economy and by relating these concepts to the more feasible scale of the regional level. The UN Regional Commissions link global principles to sectorally-based technical solutions, and function as a catalyst for the member States to make progress both in developing policy dialogue on a regional level and linking the outcomes to the global level.

2. Implementation of WSIS Geneva

Regional integration efforts contribute to the development of the global Information Society and make strong cooperation within and among regions indispensable. The regional dialogue should contribute to national capacity-building and to the alignment of national strategies with the goals of implementing the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

Based on the positive experience gained from the first phase of WSIS, and encouraged by current developments, the UN Regional Commissions continue, as mandated by the UN General Assembly, to bring regional perspectives to the global process. The proximity to member States on the one hand, and the uniquely universal geographical coverage of the UN Regional Commissions on the other, enable them to carry out globally coordinated actions, while being equipped to respect regional and national particularities.

A major step in the implementation of the Geneva phase is the round of regional preparatory conferences, which are organized in cooperation with the UN Regional Commissions in Africa (Accra, February 2005), Asia Pacific (2005), Latin America and the Caribbean (2004 & 2005), Western Asia (Damascus, November 2004), and the sub-regional meetings in Central Asia (Bishkek, November 2004) and South-East Europe (early 2005). These preparatory conferences will contribute to implementing the Geneva decisions and identifying potential obstacles to their further development and implementation.

3. Follow-up to WSIS Tunis

In the process of follow-up to WSIS Tunis 2005, the role of the UN Regional Commissions will be important to carry out the assessment of implementation at the country level and to come up with a regional perspective for building sustainable national capacity in developing and transition economies. This includes, in addition to overall objectives such as support to democracy and e-government, ways of harnessing ICT policies to create economic growth as a basis for comprehensive and balanced development.

The UN Regional Commissions routinely play a key role in participating in and contributing to World Summits of the United Nations system, based on their networks, experience and knowledge about regional particularities. The UN Regional Commissions offer an effective means for implementing and monitoring the WSIS on a global scale, while recognizing the individual needs of member States in a pluralistic and diverse Information Society.

To conclude, the UN Regional Commissions are ready to work with member States towards Tunis 2005 and beyond and we invite them to make use of our resources which are also their own.

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