

## **World Summit on the Information Society Hailed as Resounding Success Consensus and commitment in Tunis paves the way to a more equitable Information Society**

**Tunis, 18 November 2005** — The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society closed today after almost a week of intense negotiations, eight plenary sessions, 308 parallel events organized by 264 organizations and 33 press conferences attracting around 19'000 participants worldwide.

Hailed as a resounding success by national delegations from 174 States and participants from more than 800 entities including UN agencies, private sector companies and civil society organizations, the Summit was convened in Tunis to tackle the problem of the “digital divide” and harness the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to drive economic and social development.

The two Summit outcome documents — the *Tunis Commitment* and the *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* — were endorsed by world leaders at the closing plenary of the Summit on Friday evening.

Addressing delegates at the 8th and final Plenary session, Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the Summit, said it had been a long road and seven years since the idea for the Summit was first adopted by the ITU Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference. “It is fitting that this stage of our journey ends here in Tunis, the capital of the country that launched the process,” said Mr Utsumi. “Uniquely, WSIS was a Summit held in two phases. Through this approach, WSIS took place in one developed and one developing country. This helped ensure that the full range of issues of the Information Society were addressed, while highlighting the critical need to bridge the digital divide.

He added that the two-phase process has enabled the development of a concrete plan for implementation at the national, regional and international levels, which will ensure commitments that have been undertaken are fulfilled. “In a very real sense, WSIS is about making the best use of a new opportunity and a new tool. WSIS reinforces the value of global dialogue and cooperation to address emerging issues in the 21st century. The Information Society can be a win-win situation for all, provided that we take the right actions.”

### **Worldwide commitment**

19'401 participants took part in the Summit, including:

46 Heads of State and Government, Crown Princes and Vice-Presidents and 197 Ministers/Vice Ministers and Deputy Ministers

5'857 participants representing 174 States and the European Community

1'508 participants representing 92 international organizations

6'241 participants representing 606 NGOs and civil society entities

4'816 participants representing 226 business sector entities

1'222 accredited journalists from 642 media organizations of which 979 onsite from TV, radio, print and online media worldwide

## **Global agreement on crucial issues**

Three key issues dominated the preparatory process leading to the Tunis Summit: Internet governance, financing strategies, and implementation mechanisms for the Action Plan developed by the first phase of WSIS in 2003, in Geneva.

### **Internet Governance**

The breakthrough agreement on Internet governance brokered in Tunis acknowledges the need for enhanced cooperation to enable governments and is based around a number of newly agreed principles and future mechanisms: all governments should play an equal role and have equal responsibility for Internet governance while ensuring its continuing stability, security and continuity nations should not be involved in decisions regarding another nation's country code top level domain (ccTLD) there is a need for strengthened co-operation among stakeholder for public policies for generic top level domain names (gTLDs).

### **Financing mechanisms**

The WSIS outcome texts reaffirm the Geneva agreements that information and communication technologies are a key tool in national development strategies. For that reason, financing of ICT deployment is vital to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The document welcomes the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund. It underlines the importance of providing quality, affordable communication access to all citizens, and notes the inequalities that presently exist.

### **The Way Forward: Follow-up and implementation**

Tunis is not the end of the road for WSIS. As the Summit of Solutions, the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society recognizes that it is now time to turn principles into actions.

Although more than 2'500 projects were undertaken to bridge the Digital Divide between the first and second phases of WSIS, the Tunis output documents clearly emphasize that more needs to be done, and done quickly. Already, ITU is managing the WSIS stocktaking process to create a database of ICT implementation activities. For the Tunis phase of the Summit, it also created a so-called Golden Book listing projects announced during the Summit. More than 200 projects have been included to date, many of which are multi-million dollar undertakings.

### **The Dialogue Continues**

The world of ICTs is characterized by fast-paced and non-stop technological change. The Internet of tomorrow will look very different from the Internet of today, as revealed in ITU's new report, *The Internet of Things*, which was released at the Tunis summit.

The follow-up process established by WSIS contains several built-in milestones to ensure that policy review and debate continue, so that the outcomes of the Summit can be shaped to changes in the world of ICTs.

At the national level, all countries are called upon to develop national e-strategies as an integral part of national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. The deadline for this action is 2015, but many countries have already begun to implement such plans. Affordability of access is a critical part of bridging the Digital Divide. As tasked by the Summit, ITU will continue its efforts to study the question of international Internet connectivity as a matter of urgency.

The Tunis Agenda calls on ECOSOC to oversee the system-wide follow-up of the Tunis and Geneva outcomes. Consistent with the reform of ECOSOC requested by world leaders at the Summit in September in New York, the Tunis output calls on ECOSOC to review the mandate of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, including the multi-stakeholder approach.

**These efforts will culminate in an overall review by the General Assembly in 2015 of the implementation of WSIS outcomes. This is the same deadline established in the Geneva Plan of Action to connect all unconnected communities.**

**Finally, the UN General Assembly is asked to declare 17 May as World Information Society Day. 17 May has traditionally been celebrated as World Telecommunications Day, so ITU will collaborate in this process to give even greater magnitude to that event.**

Addressing delegates at the closing of the 8th and final Plenary session, Mr Utsumi spoke of his satisfaction that the WSIS process has put ICTs at the centre of countries' national development plans. "As a result of this Summit, world leaders are now fully aware of the critical importance of ICTs," he said. In the end, he continued, WSIS is "not just about technology. It's mostly about people, and their potential."