Forum Information Society: A European Way for the Information Society

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On 22 March 2000, the European Commission welcomed the Third Annual Report of the Information Society Forum (ISF). The ISF was founded in 1995 to give independent advice to the Commission of the European Communities on the development of the Information Society. The Report covers major issues relating to the development of the Information Society and contains a list of recommendations addressed to the European Commission and the European Union to consider actions in different areas.

The Report proposes a specific European approach for the Information Society that keeps the balance between different concerns and goals such as, on the one hand, economic concerns, and on the other hand, social needs and environmental concerns. The report's principles have been summarised as "liberty, equality, fraternity, solidarity & sustainability". Access to public services, consumer confidence, citizen participation, democratic involvement, protection of privacy, social cohesion and sustainability are some of the issues covered by the Report. In securing these issues, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) should have an important role to play - according to the ISF's Chairman, Claudio Carrelli.

ICT offers valuable tools that should improve the citizen's relationship with the public service. But this will occur only if there is a change in the culture of government and of public service towards a "network mentality". To be able to profit the most from the Information Society, education must be transformed from the inculcation of information to instilling the skill of learning, turning the static idea of academic education and professional training into a combined process of lifelong learning. ITC should also have a major contribution to sustainable development, but only if an appropriate international framework that explicitly deals with the concerns of sustainable development is created.

ISF considers also the cultural dimension of sustainability, and warns about the dangers of a global monoculture. While the Information Society has the potential to promote cultural diversity and to enrich global communications, there is a risk that economic forces when left to themselves may lead to undesirable dominant positions concerning popular culture and the control of access to information. The ISF proposes action at international level addressed in the context of the present

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World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks.

As a global society, the Information Society requires a new international framework that deals with the needs and concerns of its members. The ISF therefore calls for a global society dialogue that discusses worldwide the definition of a framework of global governance appropriate for a sustainable global Information Society.

ISF Third Annual Report: "A European Way for the Information Society".

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