

World Summit on the Information Society: Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan

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The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in Geneva from 17 to 28 February 2003 (see IRIS 2003-3: 4). The results of this meeting consist of a draft Declaration of Principles and a draft Action Plan.

The WSIS is an initiative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations, the first having a leading organisational role (see IRIS 2002-2: 3). It will take place in two phases, the first to be held from 10 to 12 December 2003 in Geneva, the second from 16 to 18 November 2005 in Tunis. The Summit will aim at bridging the digital divide by promoting development through access to information, knowledge and communication technologies. Intergovernmental bodies, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, among others, will be involved in both phases of the Summit and in the preparatory process.

The draft documents, with which last February's meeting was concluded, include a declaration of commitment to build a new kind of society, the Information Society. This society should be inclusive. In it, all persons, without distinction of any kind, should be empowered to freely create, receive, share and utilize information and knowledge, in any media and regardless of frontiers. It must attend to the interests of all nations, especially the interests of developing and least-developed countries. Thus, it is hoped that the Information Society will reduce the gap between these countries and developed countries and that it will eliminate the existing socio-economic differences between societies. The proposed standard will be met by, for instance, building information and communication infrastructures and by educating people, in particular young people, as they are the future workforce.

The draft declaration also lays down the essential requirements for the development of an equitable Information Society, including respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of opinion and expression, and the existence of independent, pluralistic and free communication media.

In order to help implement the principles set out in the declaration, the Preparatory Committee has also drawn up a draft action plan. This plan is

designed as a flexible action plan that is to be used as a reference framework and as a source of guidance for the different countries in the world.

The results of the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the WSIS have been made available on the Internet. These documents are open to comment. Comments received before 31 May 2003 will be included in a reference document. The intention is to submit the drafts to Heads of States for their approval at the Summit in December

Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan of the World Summit on the Information Society

http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/listing.asp?lang=en&c_event=pci|1&c_type=td|

"World Summit on the Information Society - An information society for all and an opportunity for all to comment", Press release of the International Telecommunication Union of 25 March 2003

http://www.itu.int/newsroom/press_releases/2003/NP03.html

