First Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society

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The first of the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS see IRIS 2002-2: 3, IRIS 2003-3: 4, IRIS 2003-6: 2 and IRIS 2003-7: 5) took place from 10 to 12 December 2003 in Geneva.

The objective of the WSIS is to unite governments, the private business sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations, in order to build a global Information Society that must bridge the gap between poor and rich countries. The goals and proposed initiatives of the WSIS are incorporated in a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, which were adopted at the Geneva Summit.

The Declaration of Principles advocates the creation of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. An essential element in this vision is the right to freedom of opinion and expression, on the basis of which everybody should be able to participate in, and benefit from, the Information Society.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) provide new opportunities to attain higher levels of development, as information and communication lead to knowledge. To get people acquainted with the use of ICTs, it is not only important that they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that is involved in ICTs, but it is also necessary to protect the users' privacy, secure the information on the network and secure the network itself.

The Plan of Action translates the vision expressed in the Declaration of Principles into concrete objectives and action lines. It contains over 140 action items concerning the promotion of ICTs and ways to offer help to countries, so that the digital divide can be overcome.

Internet governance is one of the main focal points of the WSIS. Therefore delegates agreed to set up a working group to investigate and make proposals for action on the governance of Internet, prior to the second phase of the Summit.

The media are key actors in the Information Society. A part of the Summit was dedicated to the World Media Electronic Forum (WEMF), an event that gathered together media representatives from all over the world. Broadcasters meeting at the Forum adopted a Declaration in which they stressed their vision of and contribution to the Information Society, laying down their commitment to freedom

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of opinion and expression, access to information, freedom and pluralism of the media and cultural diversity.

The second phase of the WSIS will take place in November 2005, in Tunis.

World Broadcasting Unions, Broadcasters' Declaration

http://www.ebu.ch/departments/legal/pdf/leg_pp_wsis_declaration_broadcasters_091203.pdf

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