UN ICT TASK FORCE EVENTS IN TUNIS HELP
TO FURTHER SUMMIT AGENDA

The United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force organized nine parallel events at the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held from 16 to 18 November 2005.

These events helped to further the agenda of the Summit "with an eye on the road after Tunis", said the Task Force's Executive Coordinator, Sarbuland Khan. "The World Summit has provided a highly visible forum for advancing the critical role of ICTs in achieving development goals and for putting ICT for development issues on the 'radar screens' of policy-makers", Mr. Khan said. "What is most important now is to ensure that the energy generated does not dissipate, that the issues do not recede from the policy agenda, and that the vision and action plan formulated by the Summit do not go unfulfilled."

The parallel events, organized with some of the Task Force's partners, showcased the broad range of ICT-related issues addressed by the ICT Task Force.

Measuring the Information Society

The Partnership for Measuring ICT for Development (http://measuring-ict.unctad.org) involves 11 organizations – UNCTAD, Eurostat, the International Telecommunication Union, OECD, UNESCO, the UN ICT Task Force, the five UN Regional Commissions and the World Bank.

In less than 18 months, the Partnership has established a set of core statistical indicators that will help political leaders in allocating resources, an ITU official said at the parallel event "Measuring the Information Society" held on 15 November.

"These data will be used to make crucial decisions and to avoid duplication and waste of scarce resources", said Hamadoun Touré, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau.

The indicators measure ICT infrastructure and access; access to and use of ICT by individuals and households; use of ICT by business; and the ICT sector and trade in ICT goods.

"The work of this Partnership has a strong link with the development agenda," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs José Antonio Ocampo. "It will provide a strong rationale for ICT policies -- without data it is difficult to decide how to allocate resources and, as economists say, 'You cannot improve what you cannot measure'."

The indicators, agreed upon by key international agencies, will facilitate ICT policy-making and development in areas such as education, government and health.

After Tunis, the Partnership will continue to raise policy-makers' awareness on the importance of the indicators; assist statistical agencies in developing countries in ICT data collection and dissemination, including the development of national databases to store and analyze survey results; develop a global database of ICT indicators and make it available on the World Wide Web; and conduct regional workshops to exchange national experiences and discuss methodologies, definitions, survey vehicles and data collection.

Role of Parliaments in the Information Society

Key Parliament leaders presented their views on the role that national and regional assemblies can play in building the information society at a **"**High-level Dialogue on Governance, Global Citizenship and Technology" on 16 November. Speakers included Geoffrey Quinton Doidge of South Africa's Parliament, Paolo Gentiloni Silveri of Italy's Chamber of Deputies and Anders Johnsson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

At the event, Under-Secretary-General José Antonio Ocampo launched the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, an alliance of national and regional assemblies, international organizations, media, corporations and civil society. "Among the institutions central to promoting and consolidating good governance, parliaments are especially well placed to take advantage of ICTs, to foster democracy and narrow the democratic deficit" he said.

The Centre will enable Parliaments around the world to better fulfill their democratic functions by reinforcing their capacity to use ICT tools for the institutional process, for citizens' access to parliamentary activities and for inter-parliamentary cooperation.The event was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in cooperation with the UN ICT Task Force.

Choosing the Right Technologies for Education

At this workshop, the Global e-School Initiative (GeSCI -- www.gesci.org) presented the Total Cost of Ownership Calculator -- a framework for identifying and selecting the right ICTs for schools by assessing their benefits, feasibility and costs.

The framework developed by GeSCI seeks to simplify the complex decisions often faced by education officials and school principals when purchasing ICTs. Several developing countries, non-governmental organizations and businesses have expressed an interest in employing this generic, flexible, web-based calculator.
The 16 November event was organized by GeSCI in collaboration with the UN ICT Task Force.

Building Partnerships for the Information Society

Two high-level round tables on 16 November focused on "Regional Perspectives for the Global Information Society" and on "Women in the Information Society: Building a Gender Balanced Knowledge-based Economy".

Participants shared experiences and discussed how innovative technologies could support sustainable and inclusive development in the various continents, as well as the inclusion of women as key actors in the information society.

The event was co-organized by the UN Regional Commissions, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the ICT Task Force.

Putting ICTs to Work for the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Development Agenda

The 17 November round table examined how ICT can be applied to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, and discussed ways to raise awareness of ICT as an enabler of development.

The event sought to increase support and commitment among policy-makers and to promote scaling-up of successful initiatives in order to accelerate the impact of ICT on development.

The round table, organized by the UN ICT Task Force in collaboration with the UN Fund for International Partnerships and UNCTAD, was the second in a series of discussions on ICT for development issues. It built on the results of the 13 September round table on "Innovation and Investment: Scaling Science and Technology, especially ICTs, to meet the Millennium Development Goals", held in New York on the eve of the 2005 World Summit.

Achieving Better Quality and Cost Efficiency in Health Care and Education through ICTs

The 17 November panel demonstrated the potential of ICTs to improve quality and cost efficiency of key public services, with specific focus on education and health care.

Panellists shared case studies to illustrate and quantify the returns on ICT investments in health care and education and explored means by which developing countries, in partnership with donors, the private sector and international organizations, could develop and carry out education and health strategies integrating ICTs.
Speakers included Under-Secretary-General José Antonio Ocampo and Thomas Ganswindt of the Executive Board of Siemens AG.

The panel was co-organized by Siemens and the UN ICT Task Force. Siemens is the Convenor of the Task Force's Working Group on Human Resources Development and Capacity-Building, which works closely with United Nations agencies and private and public partners, together with educators and researchers in both developed and

developing countries, to promote the use of ICT for capacity building and human resource development.

Bridging the Digital Divide with Broadband Wireless Internet

The 17 November round table focused on the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployments play in bridging the digital divide. On the basis of the work undertaken over the last two years by the Wireless Internet Institute (http://www.w2i.org) in cooperation with the ICT Task Force, participants identified best regulatory practices to establish affordable service, case studies and lessons learned.
The event, which brought together representatives from governments, the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and international development agencies, sought to stimulate momentum and reinforce leaders' commitment to accelerate the adoption of broadband wireless technologies in support of universal access.
Speakers included Daniel Aghion, Executive Director of the Wireless Internet Institute, Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the UN Fund for International Partnerships and Bruno Lanvin, Lead E-strategies Advisor at the World Bank.
The event was co-organized by the ICT Task Force and the Wireless Internet Institute.

As a contribution to WSIS II the UN ICT Task Force issued several publications:

Open Access for Africa – Challenges, Recommendations and Examples

What options are there to increase access on a wide scale for people in Africa? Would a Pan-African fiber network be possible? These and other issues are explored in "Open Access for Africa – Challenges, Recommendations and Examples". The articles in this publication build on the workshop "Open Access" organized by the United Nations ICT Task Force Working Group on the Enabling Environment in partnership with IDRC, Sida, the Eduardo Mondlane University and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, in Maputo in May 2005 (www.openaccess.uem.mz). The publication includes contributions from presenters at the workshop as well as other authors with interesting perspectives on the issue. The publication examines different aspects of how to provide increased availability of ICT infrastructure and services for Africa, including identifying the appropriate actors, the relevant technologies, and suggestions for regulatory frameworks as well as how to support the entrepreneurship that is necessary to build sustainable information and communication technology networks in Africa. The different authors represent a variety of stakeholders, including governments, academia, NGOs and the private sector.

The World Summit on the Information Society: Moving From the Past into the Future

In this publication, number 8 of the UN ICT Task Force Series, more than 50 authors – key WSIS players – tell their story about the making of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Describing what really happened in the

Geneva conference halls and behind closed doors in the WSIS process, this book will give readers an insight to how global diplomacy is moving forward into the 21st century.
The book is subdivided into three parts. Part I covers "Politics and Diplomacy" and analyzes the WSIS process from the perspective of intergovernmental organizations, governments, private sector and civil society. Part II, "Principles and Actions", goes through the substantial issues of the WSIS: History and Theory, Development, Financing and Capacity Building, Human Rights, Media Freedoms, Cultural Diversity and Intellectual Property, and Internet Governance. Part III looks into the future, towards WSIS II in Tunis and beyond.
Next to personal reflections of main negotiators, the book presents statements by high officials as well as academic analyses, both from the governmental and the non-governmental perspective. The book includes the WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

Harnessing the Potential of ICT for Education – A Multistakeholder Approach – Proceedings of the Dublin Global Forum of the United Nations ICT Task Force

This volume, number 9 in the UN ICT Task Force Series, is a collaboration between the UN ICT Task Force and the Global e-School Initiative (GeSCI). It contains key presentations and contributions from the Global Forum on ICT for education that the ICT Task Force held on 13-15 April 2005 in Dublin. It captures innovative ideas and initiatives on the use of ICT in strengthening education and communities and highlights the enabling role of all relevant stakeholders. It also introduces case studies of ICT-based projects at the grassroots level and efforts to create a national infrastructure that makes use of new technologies to improve teaching and learning habits. This book shows how education is the cornerstone of sustainable development and contributes to building a modern and thriving society and empowers communities and citizens to fully participate in development and prosperity. This publication is a valuable reference for anyone seeking solutions or thinking about the use of technology in education.

Four books published by the UN ICT Task Force were launched in Tunis during the Summit:

Village Phone Replication Manual

The book, number 10 of the UN ICT Task Force Series, addresses the challenge of extending communication networks to rural areas in developing countries. Given the high cost of deploying telecommunications infrastructure, governments and industry have little financial incentive to extend such networks. Telecommunications providers are reluctant to place public access telephone booths in rural areas, due to initial investment and ongoing maintenance costs. Governments, through their regulators, often place "Universal Access" requirements on providers. These requirements result in an infrastructure investment that can make access available to some degree. Such services typically operate at a loss, and providers maintain them as a duty to their licensing obligation.

High initial infrastructure investment, relative low call volumes, high maintenance costs due to harsh environments, cash box collection needs, cash security costs (for coin-operated phones), card availability (for prepaid airtime systems), technical illiteracy, remote locations and high transportation costs are just some of the obstacles to providing rural telecommunications access. "Village Phone" addresses these issues, indicating a profitable new market niche for telecommunications companies, new and profitable micro-enterprises for rural poor Village Phone Operators, and affordable and accessible access for communities.

The Village Phone Manual was published by the UN ICT Task Force in collaboration with Grameen Foundation USA and the World Bank.

Information and Communication Technology for Peace. The Role of ICT in Preventing, Responding to and Recovering from Conflict

The examples of ICT use in warfare are well-known: propaganda, intelligence, communications and ICT-enabled weapons systems. This report, number 11 in the UN ICT Task Force Series, shows that ICTs can have a special role in promoting peace. They can be used to diffuse a situation leading to conflict, help end a conflict and allow stabilization after a conflict.

This report was published in collaboration with the Swiss Government.

Reforming Internet Governance: Perspectives from the Working Group on Internet Governance

This volume, number 12 in the UN ICT Task Force Series, presents papers by former members of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) and its Secretariat that were written subsequent to the release of the Working Group's report in July 2005. The contributors offer their personal reflections on the value of the multistakeholder cooperation in the Working Group and beyond, and on key substantive issues and institutional reform proposals currently under consideration by the world community. The issues addressed in this book remain of central importance in the post-Summit global debate on Internet governance.

The Promise of Broadband Wireless Communities

For the last three years, the Wireless Internet Institute (W2i) and the UN ICT Task Force have been cooperating on the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployment plays in bridging the digital divide. This second edition of "The Promise of Broadband Wireless Communities" captures and summarizes this work, conducted through a unique programme of meetings and publications, awareness raising, consensus building, sharing of best practices, training of regulators and exploration of sustainable business models. Led by W2i and the ICT Task Force and with the financial support of more than 30 private sector organization, this programme has gathered over

250 expert field practioners, referenced over 120 case studies and published seven reports and white papers, reaching out to over 2,000 fellows and 1,500 meeting participants.

The programme has triggered several landmark initiatives, including the acceleration of liberalization of unlicensed spectrum policy in South Africa, the Wireless Corridor in the State of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Wireless Philadelphia and the statewide deployment of a broadband wireless infrastructure in Nigeria's rural state of Jigawa.