



## editorial

### A special year

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will be the first summit of the new millennium, and will be devoted to all questions regarding the new information and communication technologies.

The Summit will be held in two phases: Geneva in December 2003, and Tunis in 2005. Governments, civil society and the private sector will all be integrated into the formal Summit process

In Geneva, the international community will break new ground as it sets in motion an international communication process of a new genre. Communication means sharing information, and the mastery of it should lead to mutual benefit.

The Swiss team in charge of the organization of the WSIS realises that a special effort must be made in order to provide the public, and the media, with much-needed information about the Summit. The newsletter will bring some transparency to the different stages of Summit preparation as they unfold: including the formal preparatory process, the discussion of issues to be debated at the Summit, and a profile of some of the major players involved. The second edition of the Bulletin, to coincide with Prepcom 2 (February 17-28), will highlight the role of OFCOM's Director-General Marc Furrer, responsible for the Swiss participation in the Summit, and will report on the WSIS activities which will have taken place during the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos. We welcome your feedback, and hope you find this a useful tool as we move forward to the Summit.

Office of the Delegate of the Swiss Federal  
Council for the World Summit on the  
Information Society

Rue de Varembe 9 - 11 P.O. Box 125  
1211 Geneva 20 Switzerland  
Tel: +41 (0) 22 748 27 70  
Fax: +41 (0) 22 748 27 89  
[www.wsisgeneva2003.org](http://www.wsisgeneva2003.org)

## WSIS: Switzerland's commitment



The Minister receives a special WSIS pen from  
Ambassador Stauffacher.

In December of this year Switzerland will host the first World Summit on the Information Society convened by the United Nations Organisation. Geneva will have the honour of welcoming the planet's Heads of State and Governments whose mission is to build a fair cyberspace, guaranteeing access to the new information and communications technologies to all peoples. For the first time in history, in a surge of good-will assembling governments, civil society and the private sector, the world of politics has an appointment with virtual reality: to splice together technological and social progress, economic development, human rights and democracy. I am proud to pledge that the host country will do its utmost to put its tradition of hospitality at the service of a federating event of this magnitude the global repercussions of which affect all spheres of human activity.

Prior to and during the Geneva World Summit, the Federal Council for its part will marshal all its organisational capabilities, its penchant to listen and to initiate in order to meet the challenge of the digital revolution. Without any regulatory effort this revolution can but deepen the divide, not only between the North and the South, but even amongst industrialised countries. This proves how serious a venture the ongoing process to prepare the World Summit this year is, demanding not only an open mind and a generous heart on the part of all the players, but also a high degree of competence and, let it not be left unsaid, a unifying vision of the Information Society in the making. A society at the service of human development that we wish to fashion and not just endure.

Micheline Calmy-Rey  
Federal Councillor

## Joseph Deiss highlights the importance of WSIS

"Switzerland wishes to contribute its own experience to the abundant francophone variety of cultural diversity to stimulate the inter-cultural dialogue at the international level, the only means of safeguarding the peaceful coexistence between civilisations." Joseph Deiss made this promise in a speech he delivered during the first Ministerial Conference of the International Organisation of the Francophonie (IOF) ever to take place in Switzerland last month in Lausanne.



Joseph Deiss with Boutros Boutros-Ghali



Visit to the stand of a Geneva start-up specializing in the diffusion of audio-visual content



Joseph Deiss takes an interest in the promotion of electronic commerce

In the last official speech in his capacity as Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Deiss, who just a few days later was to hand over the reins of his department to Micheline Calmy-Rey, made a point of emphasizing the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society. True, the date was December 12, 2002, exactly one year prior to the WSIS, and the presence of about 50 francophone ministers provided the ideal setting in which to advocate the host country's triple-D credo.

**Dialogue.** "It is my wish that the new information technologies, which are most likely to generate exchange and promote dialogue, be brought into play actively in order to reinforce the instruments and policies of each State in the area of inter-cultural dialogue."

**Development.** "The World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which will take place from December 10 to 13, 2003 in Geneva and the second phase in Tunis in 2005, will be a political summit which goes beyond the technology challenges related to the issue of reducing the digital divide. Switzerland believes that the Francophonie community is in an excellent position to make a significant contribution towards achieving a multilingual and multicultural environment in all the remsits

of the information society. First of all, it is a matter of helping the least advanced countries use the new information technologies to promote development."

**Diversity.** "My country, with its four cultures and four national languages, has an age-old tradition of respect for cultural diversity and cohabitation. The dialogue between our four cultures is one of its vital ingredients."

### Tribute, invitation, exhibition

As the mandate of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had "stood as godfather" to the political Francophonie, was about to end, the Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss paid tribute to IOF's first secretary general, whose overriding objective, ever since he was elected in 1997, was the "promotion of a culture of peace and above all the democratisation of international relations".

"Good-bye, and see you in Geneva next year!" On these words Joseph Deiss ended his speech after having invited the francophone ministers and their heads of state "to the next big gathering in Switzerland, the World Summit on the Information Society."

The 18<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie also offered Switzerland the

# the Francophonie in Lausanne

opportunity to give a demonstration of information and communication technologies. On this occasion, it also organized an exhibit on the most recent progress made in the area of promoting audiovisual content and international trade in the service of developing countries. This related programme permitted delegates to discover a technology developed by a young Swiss start-up (MadeinTV.com/Madein-Music.com) for the on-line webcasting of audiovisual content and of the services of the Geneva-based International UNCTAD/ WTO Trade Centre for the promotion of e-business.



Ambassador Erwin Hofer, Daniel Brélaz, Joseph Deiss and Boutros Boutros-Ghali

## A spate of questions

The unanswered questions, which pave the road until the end of 2003, say much about the challenges and the stakes of the Geneva Summit. The key question for Joseph Deiss is: "How can everyone have access to information and how can knowledge be transmitted despite the barriers raised by the infrastructure, the economics and the politics of telecommunications?"

For his part, Adama Samassékou, former minister of education of Mali and chairman of the WSIS PrepCom, put forward a wide range of debating points: "How can we establish a common vision of the information society? How should the fundamental rules of this society in the making be laid down? How can all man-

kind share in the Information Society? How can we put this Information Society at the service of human development? How can we fight against the digital divide? How can we help the people of the South to be part of this whole venture? How can we make the necessary infrastructure available to them? How can we use this infrastructure with content that respects cultural and linguistic diversity – the wealth of all the peoples of this planet? And last, but certainly not least, with which financial means?"

10 questions in all (among others, no less important ones, such as how to ensure that procedure does not crush substance, and that technology does not shroud the political vision?), which will preside over the international gatherings devoted to the preparations of the WSIS in the next 10 months – starting with PrepCom-2 next month in Geneva.

## CONFIDENTIAL

### A meeting of 8?

*To heighten the WSIS' political profile and to mobilise public opinion, the Chairman of PrepCom is considering bringing together "the inner circle of Heads of State and Governments committed to the Summit's success". Targets: the host countries (Switzerland, Tunisia) and the countries organising the regional preparatory conferences (Mali, Romania, Japan, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Egypt). A mini-summit, which could be held in Switzerland sometime in the next few months.*

## Davos

### The Summit on the programme

The digital divide remains an important item on the agenda for the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos. A private meeting of the Global Digital Divide Initiative will meet during the Forum on Monday 27 January. A panel on the official Annual Meeting programme will take place on the same day, with eminent speakers such as President Wade of Senegal, Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the UNDP, among others. They will expound on the best ways to reduce the divide and to promote development. "This is how we are giving our support and cooperation to the World Summit on the Information Society," pointed out José María Figueres, Managing Director of the WEF and former President of Costa Rica (1994-98).

Indeed, for the last three years the World Economic Forum has stepped up its efforts to help intensify consultation between governments, the private sector and NGOs within the framework of its "global digital initiative", which has resulted in specific projects in the third world. The convergence with the objectives of the Geneva Summit is highlighted by the presence in Davos of an important Swiss delegation from Bern, Bienne and Geneva, which is working on making the international gathering in December 2003 a success.

Switzerland will be involved in several important initiatives during the Annual Meeting in Davos. This will be one of the topics covered in our next Bulletin.

# Cyberspace

## “Fix the inequalities!”



Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the ITU

**W**hile information and communication technologies can remove the boundaries that keep humanity apart, many people in the world are deprived of access to information and to the tools for using it. “Until we address the injustices of this digital divide, we cannot embrace the promise of cyberspace with a clear conscience” said the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union to delegates of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society in Tokyo. Yoshio Utsumi added that the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva, 10-12 December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, is a unique opportunity to develop a shared vision of tomorrow’s information society while managing the problems of today’s information society. While televisions, radio, fixed-line and mobile telephones are already unevenly distributed, the situation of the Internet is even more unequal. According to an estimation of ITU, there were more than 500

million Internet users worldwide at the end of 2002, 80 percent of them are in the developed world. In the developing world, only one in every 50 people have Internet access compared with two out of every five in the developed world. “The problems we face are a mismatch of supply and demand. The supply is in the developed world while the demand is in the developing world,” remarked the Secretary-General of the ITU. The Summit will assist the industry, which has excessive capacity in the developed world, to identify market opportunities that exist in the developing world.

during the second half of February. Rather than rehashing or updating texts which already exist, the Bureau of the PrepCom mandated its President, Adama Samassékou of Mali, to come up with a text for submission in early 2003. This text would be crafted under his own responsibility and using resources and methods he deemed most appropriate. Indeed, it must be pointed out that during the entire preparatory phase, that is from July 2002 to December 2003, the Chairman of PrepCom is the only person who can lay claim to have been elected by the States.

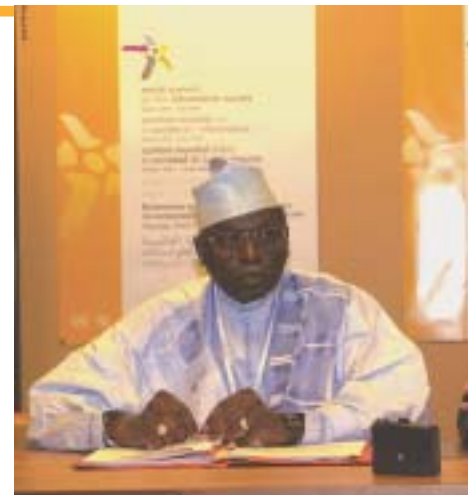
A wealth of material resulted from the results of a wide-ranging process of consultation with the States, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector and civil society, many of which submitted written contributions to the Summit’s Executive Secretariat. Thus the Chairman, Mr. Samassékou, helped by a group of

## PrepCom-2

### The course is plotted

**A**s in the case of the previous Summits, the Geneva Summit aims to adopt a Declaration and an Action Plan. When the Heads of State and Government meet next December these 2 texts should be ready for signature, and printed in the 6 official languages of the UN: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese. Perhaps some detail may have to be negotiated at the last minute at the highest level. But this should be the exception, rather than the rule.

Indeed, the States will start debating the draft texts on the occasion of the second meeting of the preparatory committee, PrepCom-2, which will convene in Geneva



Adama Samassékou, President of the PrepCom

hand-picked experts, was able to submit to the Bureau in January what he considered his “*proposal of a document for PrepCom-2’s guidance*”; in other words, the basis of which, following negotiations between the States, is to become the Declaration and the Action Plan of the World Summit on the Information Society.

### PREPARATORY MEETINGS

The following regional meetings have been or will be held to prepare for the Summit:

- African Regional Conference - Bamako (Mali) 28-30 May 2002
- Pan European Regional Conference - Bucharest (Romania) 7-9 November 2002
- Asia-Pacific Regional Conference - Tokyo (Japan) 13-15 January 2003
- Latin America/Caribbean Regional Conference - Bávaro (Dominican Republic) 29-31 January 2003
- Western Asia Preparatory Conference - Beirut (Lebanon) 4-6 February 2003
- League of Arab States Regional Conference - Cairo (Egypt) June 2003