

**PASCAL COUCHEPIN,
PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS
CONFEDERATION**

This is the first time that Switzerland has had the honour of hosting and co-organising a global summit as a full member of the United Nations. I am very proud that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has given our country the task of organising the first stage of this summit. It gives us great satisfaction to be able to pave the way for others, and at the same time it acts as a source of genuine motivation.

Many people around the world have no access to communications networks. Information and communication are the most important preconditions for the economic and cultural development of any society. It is therefore our duty to bridge the «digital divide».

I hope that this meeting of representatives from all interest groups in the information society will lead to a successful exchange of information and experiences, and that this will in turn help to reduce the gulf between rich and poor and bring different cultures closer together.

The political declaration and the plan of action make up only one aspect of this summit. Switzerland is also coordinating a range of events that will take place at the same venue as the Global Summit. Unique among these Summit Events is the presentation of practical measures that permit those involved to develop tailor-made solutions to specific problems and to initiate further projects.

On behalf of the Swiss Federal Council, I am delighted to welcome you to the World Summit on the Information Society and would like to wish you all every success in your meetings and discussions.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pascal Couchepin".

Pascal Couchepin

**KOFI A. ANNAN,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

What do we mean when we talk of an «information society»? The expression is both a description and an aspiration.

As a description, the term captures the times in which we live, as did other terms such as the atomic age and the industrial age – and even the stone and iron ages of antiquity. For we live today in an era in which information is omnipresent, through newspapers, radio, television and the Internet; in which information is transforming the ways we live, learn, work and relate; and in which information is indispensable – for health, agriculture, education and trade, and for cultivating the engaged and learned citizenry that is essential for democracy to work.

Description turns to aspiration when we consider what to do with the masses of information and knowledge increasingly at our disposal – how to make it serve some greater purpose, be it peace, development, human rights, global harmony or all of these together. The liberating and democratizing power of information is as old as the Rosetta Stone or Gutenberg Press. What is new today are the technologies that are dramatically accelerating its global dissemination. These technologies are a tremendous force for creating opportunities, and for integrating people and nations into the global economy. But too many of the world's people remain untouched by the information revolution. A «digital divide» threatens to exacerbate already-wide gaps between rich and poor, within and among countries. The technologies are also raising important social and other concerns, from privacy rights and freedom of expression to the ability of local and indigenous voices to be heard in an era of media concentration and mass culture.

The World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, December 2003, and Tunis, November 2005) is a timely opportunity. Organized by the International Telecommunication Union with the support of the United Nations system, it can help us



«While technology shapes the future, ultimately it is people who shape technology.»

understand better how the information revolution is transforming our societies. It offers a forum to develop a shared vision of an information society that empowers and benefits all people. And it can help us to make specific connections between information technologies and the Millennium Development Goals set by the international community, since without creative and widespread of those technologies, the goals will be that much harder to meet.

The Summit should also be a place to forge partnerships. Many actors have much to offer: the scientists that make the technology possible; the private sector enterprises that turn science into tools; the community groups and civil society organizations that are so dynamic in using those tools; the governments that create the necessary regulatory frameworks; and the media, who are both creators of content and connections that tie the global village together, and essential watchdogs that illuminate us about our world – thanks to the precious right of press freedom, as spelled out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. A parallel event to the Summit, the World Electronic Media Forum, will bring together media executives and practitioners from developed and developing countries, as well as policy-makers, to discuss the role of the electronic media in the information society.

Information technologies are the driving forces of globalization, with great potential to help people improve their lives. But they are not an end in themselves, or a magic formula that is going to solve all our problems. While technology shapes the future, ultimately it is people who shape technology, and decide to what uses it can and should be put. The World Summit on the Information Society can and must help us do just that.



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Kofi A. Annan

**ZINE EL ABIDINE BEN ALI,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA****For a strategic partnership based on solidarity.**

The World Summit on the Information Society, proposed by Tunisia in 1998, is the first major event of the new millennium and constitutes a historic opportunity for the international community to agree on a common vision of the Information Society and to develop an approach for action aimed at bridging the digital divide and allowing the advent of an Information Society that is balanced and accessible to all.

Strongly committed to the principles of solidarity between peoples and dialogue among civilizations, Tunisia reaffirms its determination to contribute to the success of this Summit in Geneva in December 2003, and to the crowning of the Summit at its second phase in Tunis in November 2005. It will strive for that goal through its contribution to efforts making possible the achievement of results reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the international community in all its components, and meeting the objectives of the Millennium Declaration.

To achieve its main objective, which consists in promoting the Information Society and consecrating the Communication and Information Technologies as a strategic tool for balanced development at the economic, social and cultural levels, this Summit is called upon to establish a bridge between different development levels and various digital cultures, and to develop a genuine form of cooperation that is coordinated and involving all the concerned parties: governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector.

Today, we are proud to participate in the first phase of the Summit, driven by the hope of collectively establishing a platform for peace and economic and human development in the world, without exclusion, based on a firm political commitment, and of raising the issue of the digital divide in a context of strategic partnership based on solidarity.

In view of the unity of its process, the success of the Summit depends on the success of each of its two phases. The interdependence of the two phases is not only a factor of dynamism but also and certainly a guarantee of success.

Tunisia wishes all success to this Summit at its first phase. Faithful to its time-honored tradition of hospitality, our country is already looking forward to welcoming all representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector, at the second phase of the Summit scheduled for November 16-18, 2005.



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Zine El Abidine Ben Ali

**MORITZ LEUENBERGER,
FEDERAL COUNCILLOR, HEAD OF THE
FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT,
TRANSPORT, ENERGY AND
COMMUNICATIONS**



The goal of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is to guarantee access to information for all the planet's inhabitants, regardless of their economic situation, their language or where they live. It strives for a better, fairer world, in which technology compensates for and corrects the harmful effects of globalisation of the economy. But the summit also wishes to discuss information content and thus freedom of expression and the role of the media in a democracy. In order better to achieve these ambitious aims, the summit has adopted an original approach by involving new players: civil society and the private sector.

Building infrastructures in those countries which lack them is indispensable in order to overcome the digital divide which separates rich from poor. The crucial question of financing these infrastructures is unavoidable and will be discussed in Geneva.

But the most refined technology is powerless if people cannot use it. Let us not forget that half of humanity does not even possess a simple telephone and that a fifth of the world's population can neither read nor write. This is why the Summit must not neglect radio, a traditional electronic medium.

In Geneva, these questions will not be restricted to discussions between governments. A genuine market-place for ideas, a meeting place and an exchange of experience is being initiated with NGOs and the private sector and around 200 events will take place there.

I would like to thank you for your presence and your commitment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moritz Leuenberger'.

Moritz Leuenberger



**YOSHIO UTSUMI,
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION
UNION (ITU), SECRETARY-GENERAL**

The International Telecommunication Union has dedicated itself during its 138-year history to helping the world communicate. From telegraph to telephone, radio to satellite broadcasting, Internet to wireless technology, ITU has strived for universal and affordable access to the tools of communication that tie our world together.

The road to the Summit began in 1985 when ITU's groundbreaking report, «The Missing Link» identified the inequalities in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) between the developed and developing world. When our proposal to convene a World Summit on the Information Society was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly the way was paved for this historic event; the Summit will be the first global forum to address at the highest political level the challenges created by the explosive growth in ICTs.

There have been tremendous opportunities and benefits resulting from the development of an information-based society; but it has also created legitimate concerns, such as ensuring access to ICTs, while preserving fundamental human rights, security and privacy. I am confident that our commit-

ment to a multi-stakeholder cooperative strategy, which has been the hallmark of our preparations, will result in a common understanding of how to address the challenges of the Information Society and extend its advantages to all of humanity.



Yoshio UTSUMI

**H.E. ADAMA SAMASSEKOU,
PRESIDENT OF THE WSIS PREPARATORY COMMITTEE**

The aspirations of the World Summit on the Information Society represent an immense challenge for humankind. Beyond even the technological and societal stakes already referred to in the Declaration and Action Plan, a vision even more all-embracing is emerging. Given that the information and shared knowledge society permits the circulation of information and knowledge worldwide, that all of humanity now has the potential to share its knowledge and know-how, that the creation and dissemination of educational, scientific, cultural, informative and recreational content is now becoming possible for all peoples throughout the world, we are now able to envisage a new solidarity between human beings, social groups and nations around the planet – a solidarity based on the sharing of knowledge, a genuine solidarity founded on a better knowledge of the other and on mutual respect.

That is the reason why I would like to appeal to each of the stakeholders of the information society committed to the preparation of the Summit, to governments, private sector, civil society and international organisations, to commit themselves to better working together in order to make our Summit the World Summit of Solidarity !



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adama Samassékou'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Adama Samassékou

Adama Samassékou, former Minister of Education of Mali, President of the African Academy of Languages and founder of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education, is currently President of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

**ROBERT CRAMER,
PRESIDENT, GENEVA STATE COUNCIL,
REPUBLIC AND STATE OF GENEVA**

The Geneva State Council wishes you a very warm welcome to this World Summit on the Information Society. And, for the very first time, the general public and local government form together, with visiting Heads of State, an integral part of an International Conference. This is a unique event; both for the United Nations as well as for the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The participation by the general public, together with representatives of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), will surely serve to enrich the outcome of this conference. It will also give the opportunity for all concerned to express their own particular preoccupations with regard to the enormous challenges posed by the latest developments in Information Technology.

More than 200 different events will be taking place during this Summit, open to participants and public alike.

And the aim of the Summit, to allow everyone in the world access to the very latest developments in Information Technology is already underway, and is guaranteed to stir the passions of all.

Allow me, in the name of the Geneva State Council, to make a wish that the choice of Geneva will contribute to the outstanding success of this World Summit on the Information Society, which means so much to so many.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cramer'.

Robert Cramer

Universal Access

Mobility is the way forward

Universal Access will make our world a better place.

Mobility is the key because it offers the fastest, most affordable and most innovative way to bring the power of ICT to millions of people.

But, the ambition of Universal Access will only be achieved when government, social agencies and the private sector orchestrate their activities. It is only by working together that we will achieve our goal.

To hear more visit us in Hall 4, stand 265.

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