

Carthage declaration

On the Digital Divide

World Congress on the Digital Divide

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Abstract: Representatives of the engineering and technology community, gathered in Tunis October 14- 16, 2003 as part of the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society, agreed on the following principles. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer enormous potential to generate and distribute wealth, but it is essential that the digital gap between the “info rich” and the “info poor” be closed. The World Summit on the Information Society is seen as a forum for debating the issues and advancing viable solutions by engaging the public/private sector in partnerships. The proven ability of innovation and research-development to find solutions to problems generated by the new Information Society is emphasised, but the development of technology must not be guided solely by profit

Key words: development, Digital Divide, “information poor”, “information rich”, innovation, research

INTRODUCTION

Representatives of the engineering and technology community gathered in Tunis October 14- 16, 2003 as part of the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations. There was active participation of representatives from:

- The Tunisian, Swiss and Senegalese governments;
- The International Telecommunications Union;
- UNESCO, the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa and western Asia, The International Satellite Organization, the Technical Park of Trieste, the World Innovation Foundation.

PRINCIPLES

The representatives have agreed upon the following principles:

- *Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer enormous potential to generate and distribute wealth* and contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and World Summit for Sustainable Development Plan of Action.
- *It is essential that the digital gap between the «info rich » and the « info poor » be closed.* The digital gap contributes to the widening of the economic gap and aggravates exclusion and marginalization.
- *There is strong concern regarding the growing disparities of network access.* The disparities extend beyond the North-South and exist within countries, between generations, and different social classes.
- *The World Summit on the Information Society has a convincing potential* as a forum for debating the issues and advancing viable solutions by engaging the public/private sector in partnerships.
- *The proven ability of innovation and research-development* to find solutions to problems generated by the new Information Society is emphasized.
- *The development of technology must not be guided solely by profit;* science, engineering and technology must serve the needs of people.
- *The determination to actively work as partners* to reduce the Digital Divide is affirmed. Engineers are on the front lines, their fundamental role is to adapt science for the benefit of people, in particular the poor.
- *A vision on the Information Society is affirmed:* a society which is open and inclusive, promotes the diffusion of knowledge and facilitates the sharing of information. A society that values the development of human beings above all else, one that respects cultural and linguistic diversity.

- *A call is put to governments* to agree to commit resources to create a vehicle for financing low cost high speed network access that enables the sharing of knowledge and technologies meeting basic human needs for water, food, energy and health. It is strongly suggested to use the Solidarity Fund created by the United Nations in order to meet above mentioned goals.