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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 10 July 2006, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. HACHANI

(Tunisia)

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Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (E/2006/85)

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (E/2006/31, Supplement No. 11)

The PRESIDENT said that the general segment of the substantive session would begin by considering the report of the Secretary-General on the modalities of the inter-agency coordination of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes including recommendations on the follow-up process (E/2006/85) and of the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) on its ninth session (E/2006/31, Supplement No. 11).

The World Summit, held in two phases in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in November 2005, had culminated in the adoption of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which had been endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/252. By paragraph 105 of the Tunis Agenda, the Summit had requested that the Council oversee the system-wide follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes, and that at its substantive session of 2006 it review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), including consideration of the strengthening of the Commission, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach.

The report of the Secretary-General contained a number of recommendations on how the Council could fulfil its oversight function as well as on how the CSTD could be strengthened to enable it to assist the Council in its task. Following the open informal consultation meeting organized in Geneva in May 2006 under his chairmanship to obtain the views of all WSIS stakeholders on the role of CSTD, he intended to convene informal consultations among Council members with a view to moving rapidly towards a draft resolution on the subject.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) introducing the report of the Secretary-General, said that the four outcome documents of WSIS - the Geneva Declaration of Principles, the Geneva Plan of Action, the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society - had collectively framed a compelling vision

of a global, inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred Information Society, accompanied by an extensive and forward-looking programme of action to carry forward the Summit's decisions.

Implementation and follow-up of the WSIS outcomes were distinct tasks, which should however inform and benefit from one another. The outcomes clearly stated that WSIS implementation and follow-up should be an integral part of the United Nations coordinated and integrated response to major United Nations conferences and summits, and should contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. While giving the United Nations system a pivotal role in implementation and follow-up of WSIS outcomes, Member States had explicitly endorsed the full involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in responding to the Summit goals.

In reviewing the composition, mandate and agenda of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to enable it to assist in the follow-up of WSIS, the Council might wish to take into account experience with the follow-up mechanisms and practices put in place for other major United Nations conferences and summits. The aim should be to ensure clarity as to the respective focus of the work of the Council and of the Commission, thereby avoiding duplication while ensuring maximum support by the Commission for the Council's functions.

With regard to mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation, the Chief Executive Board for Coordination of the United Nations System (CEB) at its meeting earlier that year and in accordance with the Summit's request to the Secretary-General had approved the establishment of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS). Its overall purpose would be to serve as an information and coordination nexus for the inter-agency activities associated with implementation of the WSIS outcomes and, in particular, to promote a coordinated approach to the substantive and policy issues facing the United Nations system in the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda. As the focal point for inter-agency coordination, UNGIS would also interface with country-level coordination arrangements spearheaded by the Resident Coordinator system and with the United Nations Development Group.

In response to the call by the Summit for the promotion of national, regional and international multi-stakeholder partnerships, the Secretary-General had recently launched a

Global Alliance for ICT and Development to provide an open platform for dialogue on the policy issues involved in harnessing the potential of ICT for development. The Alliance, which had held its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June 2006, could provide valuable input to the intergovernmental debate within the Council on ICT's contributions to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, as well as support for the CSTD in the discharge of its responsibilities for the follow-up to WSIS.

The main message of the Secretary-General's report, which also focused on the steps taken to convene the Internet Governance Forum, was that implementation of and follow-up to WSIS outcomes would require consistent support and guidance from national governments, the systematic engagements of relevant intergovernmental bodies and international organizations, as well as the active involvement of all other stakeholders.

Keynote address by H.E. Mr. Jamaludin Jarjis, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Malaysia

Mr. JARJIS (Malaysia) said that the United Nations and its organs were to be congratulated on taking a leading role towards the development of a truly equitable global information society. Conventional development instruments and institutions were no longer adapted to the knowledge-driven economy, in which knowledge capital was the "new currency" and the new "raw material". His country supported strengthening of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), since the knowledge economy would be powered by innovation, driven by science and technology and supported by a pervasive information economy and society. It likewise welcomed the establishment of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) as a multi-stakeholder platform for policy dialogue and partnership, which should be extended to include other development institutions such as the World Bank and regional development banks.

As we move closer towards becoming "One World", we must retain the richness and diversity of our cultures, values and communities. Content issues should be central to strategies for generating economic wealth and employment linked to poverty eradication and the promotion of health and learning. Alongside the Global Alliance for ICT and Development

(GAID), the Internet Governance Forum had a major role to play in creating the enabling environment for an equitable information society. Internet governance must not be left to chance nor dominated by any particular interest group or community.

There was a need to create the proper environment for an information society that promoted innovation and development. Despite the success of the World Summit, a comprehensive operational plan to promote ICT as a tool for advancing the development agenda was still lacking. In the interim, the United Nations might consider establishing a networking platform aligned to GAID to harmonize ICT for Development initiatives.

The knowledge and ICT development agenda must be linked to overall development programmes. There were many simple information technologies that had significant social and economic impacts for development. The agriculture sector, for example, could benefit greatly from ICT and knowledge inputs, of the kind provided by institutions such as the Grameen Bank and the Asoka Foundation funding technology for the masses.

In developing ICT potential, it was important to distinguish between: countries lacking the basic enabling environment, where the priority should be on basic human needs; countries at an early stage of ICT take-off; and countries with significant ICT programmes and a strong ICT industry. In the case of the low-speed countries, the government and public sector must spearhead the development agenda while gradually increasing the participation of the private sector. For the medium speed countries, a strong public-private sector partnership was essential to promote the development agenda. For the high-speed countries, the private sector should be the engine for development with the government playing the facilitator role. Other countries, particularly the developing ones, might benefit from Malaysia's experience in systematically moving from a post-independence agriculture economy through an industrial economy to the present-day information economy driven by innovation and knowledge.

The United Nations and other multilateral agencies must promote ICT as an integral part of their development policy, in the same way as transportation and water or electricity supply. Development banks should play a leading role by providing financing support for ICT

investment and by helping to create a conducive environment for private sector participation. Cooperation between the private sector and public agencies must be sensitive to people's needs and should not be governed by market forces and market demand alone.

Capacity-building must be at the core of the ICT for Development agenda, at least in its initial stages. ICT must be mainstreamed in development programmes in accordance with the needs of each country and with the values and culture of local communities, avoiding a "one-size-fits-all approach". In that connection, a global networking platform was required for frank discussion of non-technical issues such as content development and management.

There was a need to focus on information security and to provide a secure environment for the information society to realize its economic growth potential and enhance societal values. Malaysia's Cyber Security Centre could serve as a platform for collective efforts to counter cyber-terrorism and promote a trusted networking environment for the information society.

Finally, Malaysia proposed the establishment of a United Nations Cyber-Development Corps programme as a mechanism for bridging the digital divide. It should take the form of a multi-stakeholder body, modelled on South-South collaboration and geared to local community needs, that would serve as an instrument for change and countering potential disorder in the new information- and knowledge-driven world.

Urgent action was needed to provide a solution that went beyond basic connectivity and information by ensuring equal opportunity for all to learn and innovate, thereby contributing collectively to human development. Developing countries needed knowledge and ICT that responded to the specific needs of their economic, social and cultural environments.

Mr. BRUINSMA (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) said that UNCTAD had been fully engaged in the WSIS process and attached great importance to its implementation and follow-up. The Summit's outcome was a vision of an inclusive people-centred and development-oriented information society and an action oriented plan for realizing that vision. It was time to end meetings and focus on action for the benefit of all.

The implementation and follow-up of WSIS was a challenging undertaking. Promoting an information society was not a single-issue problem since ICT involved cross-cutting technologies with broad economic and social implications and impacts. The Summit had attracted strong stakeholder involvement at the national, regional and international levels, and the acquired momentum must be maintained throughout the implementation process. The Tunis Agenda provided a roadmap for achieving the Summit's goals, which called for clear, efficient and accountable measures based on cooperation and avoiding duplication of effort.

UNCTAD, in its facilitator role, had already cooperated closely with a number of actors in the WSIS process. In May 2006, it had organized a meeting on e-business and e-employment in cooperation with ILO and ITC, and the three organizations planned to establish an online tool to facilitate dialogue among all stakeholders. Later in the year, it planned to hold a joint UNCTAD, ILO and OECD expert meeting on the use of ICT to promote growth and development. The key challenge was the creation of added value, including in the poorest countries, and the engineering of a quantum leap in productivity in the developing countries.

UNCTAD had provided inputs to the Council for the task of reviewing the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and it had organized a brainstorming session on strengthening the Commission for the purpose of assisting the Council in its work. The Commission had recently held a meeting attended by a number of ministers and high officials as well as members of civil society to discuss ways of reducing the technology gap within and between nations. It had decided to select as the substantive theme of the 2006-2008 review and policy cycle "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society with a view to enhancing digital opportunities for all."

The role of science and technology in economic and social development was emerging as one of the most important issues in science and technology policy. However, scientific and technological development was not restricted to ICTs and the Commission could develop an interest in technologies with great importance for scientific progress, such as nano- and biotechnologies, and in the challenges of innovative management and technology transfer. UNCTAD was committed to placing science and technology high on the development agenda and to supporting the Commission in the discharge of its new and existing mandates.

Mr. KUMALDO (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) should be strengthened in terms of its membership, mandate, and working methods in order to assist the Council in its system-wide follow-up of the WSIS outcomes. However, any review of the CSTD should recognize that it was an intergovernmental body and that established practices should be observed in deciding the modalities of stakeholder participation.

The Commission's follow-up functions should include: reviewing progress at international, regional and national levels in the implementation of provisions in the Summit's final documents; making recommendations to the Council on policy lines and options for future activities; promoting dialogue and building partnerships for further development of the information society; and operationalizing paragraph 60 of the World Summit Outcome. Increasing the number of member countries from 33 to 47 (in line with the composition of the Human Rights Council) and adopting the same participation model as the Commission on Sustainable Development could strengthen the Commission. The private sector might also be included among the participants in view of the important role of the business community in ensuring implementation.

For the purposes of system-wide follow-up, the CSTD could follow the proposal in the Secretary-General's report by adopting a series of two-year "follow-up cycles", including a review session in the first year and a policy session in the second year. The objective of the review session would be to evaluate progress in implementing the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, drawing on the work of the action-line moderators/facilitators and on that of the United Nations Group on the Information Society expected to be established within the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB). The aim of the policy session would be to debate and discuss obstacles, as well as solutions, to the implementation of the Geneva Plan and the Tunis Agenda. The outcome of those sessions would be reported regularly to the Council for consideration at its annual coordination segment.

In that connection, UNCTAD must be provided with the necessary financial and human resources to offer enhanced support for the Commission's expanded mandate and to ensure that such support did not come at the expense of work on its existing science and technology programmes. The CSTD's annual regular session should be increased from 5 to 10 working

days, with 4 days being dedicated to a strengthened science and technology agenda, 4 days going to WSIS follow-up, and 2 days being set aside for inputs from a multi-stakeholder platform. The participation of stakeholders in developing countries must be ensured to reflect the Commission's development orientation as well as the objectives of the World Summit and WSIS.

Mr. LÄNSIPURO (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), said that the EU associated itself with recommendations 19 and 20 in the Secretary-General's report (E/2006/85), concerning the role to be played by the United Nations group on the information society, established within the Chief Executives Board (CEB), as the focal point for inter-agency coordination of implementation of the WSIS outcomes, and the role to be assumed by the Council and the CSTD in the associated system-wide follow-up. It likewise endorsed recommendations 22 and 23 with a view to strengthening the linkages between the implementation and follow-up of WSIS and the outcomes of other United Nations conferences and summits.

Concerning recommendation 33 in the Secretary-General's report, the EU supported the suggestion that, in its review of the CSTD and in formulating its new WSIS-related functions, the Council should consider the body of practice developed for other functional commissions serving as focal points for major United Nations conferences and summits and, in particular, that it should study their practice in engaging non-State stakeholders in their work.

Concerning recommendation 34, while supporting the suggestion that the CSTD should undertake thematic reviews of follow-up of WSIS outcomes, the EU advised caution in burdening the CSTD with implementation tasks as distinct from follow-up functions. Regarding the strengthening of the Commission, it understood that its composition would reflect its new, information society-related tasks, that its secretariat could be reinforced by help from other relevant agencies, and that multi-stakeholder participation would be ensured. It agreed with recommendation 35 that regional inputs should be encouraged and incorporated in the overall assessment of implementation.

The EU noted the potential of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development as a tool for dialogue and advocacy. However, it could not be a substitute for effective multi-stakeholder

participation nor for agreed mechanisms in implementation and follow-up throughout the United Nations system. As for the Internet Governance Forum, the EU would actively engage in final preparations for its organization as well as participation in the forum itself.

The legacy left by the WSIS must be used to harness the potential of ICTs to enable people everywhere to build people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information societies through the joint efforts of Governments, civil society and the private sector.

Mr. ZIMYANIN (Russian Federation), expressing support for the decisions of Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its most recent session, noted the progress made towards the creation of a network of scientific centres within and between countries but wished to see greater stress laid on the economic and social problems linked to scientific and technological development in the transition countries. The Russian Federation would participate in consultations in the working group on the reform of the Council, particularly concerning the Council's role in implementing the decisions of the World Summit on the Information Society. However, reform should not be at the expense of the Council's existing mandate but should be based on a definition of its additional functions and of the resources necessary to discharge them. Concerning participation in the Commission's work by NGOs, civil society and representatives of the private sector, the question should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's rules of procedure. It was to be hoped that the corresponding dialogue with all interested delegations would take place within the framework of the Global Alliance.

Mr. GASS (Observer for Switzerland) said that the WSIS follow-up, which should not involve the creation of any new bodies, should be an integral part of the follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. The Council should therefore discuss the system-wide follow-up to the WSIS outcomes in the context of its annual consideration of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, linking the outcomes of WSIS with internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The review by the General Assembly of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes scheduled for 2015 should likewise take place in the framework of the broader review of the internationally agreed development goals.

The Council, in its system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS, should draw on the work of its subsidiary bodies, in particular a strengthened Commission for Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). The CSTD should be mandated to review progress at the international, regional and national levels in the implementation of action lines, to make recommendations to the Council on policy guidance and options for future activities, and to promote dialogue and build partnerships for further development of the information societies.

With regard to working methods and in line with the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 57/270B, the Commission should draw on the experience of other functional commissions with similar mandates by adopting a multi-year programme and thematic approach. There might be merit in the idea that the Commission meet in two-year cycles consisting of a “review session” followed in the second year by a “policy session”. To accommodate its original and new mandates, the duration of the annual regular session should be increased by two days at the beginning to allow for multi-stakeholder contributions. The multi-stakeholder approach should be taken into account not only in the follow-up phase but also in the implementation of the WSIS activities.

Switzerland welcomed the establishment of the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies for Development (GAID) so long as its role was to provide support for the coherence of the United Nations system and the mainstreaming of ICT for Development by helping to constitute a global multi-stakeholder platform without its taking part in operational activities.

Mr. SAINYKH (Observer for Belarus) said that Belarus fully supported the draft resolution prepared by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) at its ninth session. The recommendations were of topical concern, and could be an important contribution to overcoming the gap in the level of technological development between and within States. A particular priority for Belarus as an economy in transition was policy development, innovation and modernization in the realm of science and technology, with the participation of scientists and industry, with a view to attaining the national development targets and the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, a plan for a national innovation system was being developed, and the CSTD’s work would make a significant contribution to that work.

In 2005, his country had inaugurated a modern technological park, aimed particularly at the development and application of information and communication technology and software, which was seen as a practical contribution to the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society. Belarus attached great importance to CSTD's activities in the field of science and technology education, particularly its encouragement to young people to study and pursue careers in science and technology. It also valued the Commission's work for the creation of centres to develop research and training for developing countries and those in transition. Belarus supported the proposals for the extension of the Commission's mandate and the enlargement of its membership, subject to the monitoring of its results so as to avoid overlap and duplication. The proposal to expand the mandate and areas of work of the Commission were supported, provided the priorities in its work were preserved, duplication avoided, and fair geographical distribution ensured.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) expressed surprise that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) should have undertaken so much work on a mandate it had not in fact received. The Council itself had been requested in the Tunis Agenda to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the CSTD, including possible strengthening of the Commission. It had also been agreed that no new bodies would be created and that follow-up should be within existing approved resources. The United States believed that any proposals by the Council concerning the future role of the CSTD should be fully consistent with the ongoing United Nations reform agenda, in support of greater efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. Any proposals for change to the CSTD should address its activities in general, not simply as related to WSIS.

The United States believed that CSTD might have a limited role in WSIS follow-up, which might include the facilitation of reporting to the Council and thus to the General Assembly. Such a role should not be operational and did not require additional policy dialogues outside the agencies where the expertise lay and where the implementation of WSIS had been appropriately tasked. Attempts to expand CSTD's mandate into those areas would be inappropriate, ineffective and costly. Any role the Council decided to give CSTD in WSIS follow-up should be limited to follow-up and should not include implementation.

The effective use of limited resources and avoidance of duplication should likewise be the prime concern in activities such as the creation of databases and websites. The ITU created and maintained databases in the WSIS process and they should not be replicated. Appropriate coordination with other United Nations agencies working in the same area would be vital, perhaps linking electronic resources existing within and beyond the United Nations system.

Unlike the Commission on Sustainable Development, the CSTD was a body composed of scientific experts whose functions should be limited to expert consideration of scientific and technical issues. The CSTD should continue to function within existing resources, which should not be absorbed by an expansion of membership or the length of meetings. The potential for duplication between the CSTD, the Global Alliance and the Internet Forum should not be allowed to draw away resources from the implementation activities undertaken by other agencies. Finally, any attempt to introduce policy negotiations or recommendations into the CSTD's mandate could undermine the consensus reached at WSIS and lead to annual or biennial reconsideration of principles adopted by political leaders from around the world, thereby compromising their effective implementation.

Mr. MORÁVEK (Chairman of the Commission on Science and Technology) said that the Commission was confident of its capacity to fulfil its new mandate while continuing to address the issues relating to science and technology for development. To meet its objectives, it had adopted innovative approaches, particularly by using information and communication technologies and by involving high-level policymakers, prominent experts and Nobel laureates in its sessions, and would adopt the multi-stakeholder approach as mandated by the Tunis Agenda. The Commission had decided to select as its substantive theme for the 2006-2008 session "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society, with a view to enhancing digital opportunities for all people", which constituted the main commitment of the international community in the WSIS outcomes. The Commission looked forward to cooperating with all stakeholders in order to meet the important and challenging tasks represented by the World Summit outcome.

Mr. MARTABIT (Observer for Chile), emphasizing the importance of the follow-up to WSIS, said that the functions of the CSTD included: reviewing progress at the international, regional and national levels in the implementation of action lines, recommendations and

commitments contained in the final documents of the Summit; making recommendations to the Council on policy guidance and options for future follow-up activities; and promoting dialogue and partnerships for the further development of the information society. Member States should be appropriately represented on the Commission, whose membership should be increased with appropriate flexibility and whose sessions might reasonably be of one week's duration. His country attached special importance to multi-stakeholder representation on the Commission, to include representatives of civil society, the private sector, the scientific community and agencies within and outside the United Nations system. The Commission's secretariat should be strengthened, through the active cooperation of other agencies directly concerned with the information society. Governments and interested stakeholders should be invited to provide information on all implementation activities relevant to WSIS follow-up. On the basis of that information, the Secretary-General should compile an annual report, with the help of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), on progress achieved and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

Mr. SOW (Guinea) said that the digital gap must be transformed into digital opportunity for all, with particular reference to those countries left behind or marginalized by technological and scientific progress. The Geneva Plan of Action had established a set of targets to be reached by 2012, and the Tunis Agenda had provided an excellent blueprint for achieving those objectives. His delegation welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), which would benefit from the activities and experience of ITU, UNESCO and UNDP. A distinction must be made between inter-agency coordination and intergovernmental follow-up, in which the Council would have a key supervisory role. There was a need for coherence and coordination in implementation at country level, particularly in the least-developed and developing countries, where UNDP would have a central role to play.

Mr. ALJOWAILY (Observer for Egypt), noting that Egypt had participated in both the negotiating stages and the final work of WSIS, said there had been a clear recognition by the participants of the need for a follow-up mechanism to implement the Summit's outcomes. It had also been agreed by consensus, and subsequently confirmed by the General Assembly, that the Council and the CSTD would play a primary role in that regard. The question before the Council was therefore how that mandate was to be implemented and, in particular, how the

CSTD was to be strengthened to fulfil its new role. Strengthening should involve a quantitative increase in the representation of Member States and the duration of the Commission's meetings and a qualitative aspect relating to the Commission's proposed policy and review sessions. He noted finally that what he saw as the key requirement of the information society - that it should be future-oriented - was reflected in the title of the CSTD.

Mr. LEÓN GONZÁLEZ (Cuba), associating himself with the remarks of the representative of the Group of 77 and China, and with the comments of the representative of Egypt, said that the Council should not renew a debate that had been concluded with the adoption of paragraph 105 of the Tunis Agenda, itself endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 60/252. The Council's task was to give effect to the guidelines established by the Tunis Summit, which provided that the Council should oversee the follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes and, to that end, should review the composition, mandate and agenda of the CSTD, including considering strengthening the Commission, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach. The Council's role was clearly indicated and its work at that session should be directed towards fulfilling it.

Mr. ALCÁINE CASTRO (Observer for El Salvador) said that all delegations that had participated in the negotiations on the Tunis Agenda had been clear that the reference in paragraph 105 was to the strengthening of the CSTD and to its role in following up the Summit outcomes. He also recalled, with regard to working methods, that one of the examples that had guided the Commission in its decisions was the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Summit documents had also drawn a clear distinction between follow-up and implementation activities with a view to avoiding duplication. His delegation was ready to participate in informal discussions on the question, which he was certain would advance the agenda in the direction of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Observer for Argentina) said that Argentina supported the declaration by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China concerning the need to strengthen the composition, mandate and working methods of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) in the follow-up of the World Summit. Strengthening of the Commission's membership should reflect the need for equitable geographic distribution and

for multi-stakeholder participation in the WSIS follow-up and implementation, in accordance with the provisions of the Tunis Agenda. The terms of reference of the CSTD should be updated in keeping with its new mandate concerning the follow-up of the Summit outcomes. In that connection, it was important to examine carefully the roles and responsibilities of the different participants to ensure effectiveness and avoid any overlap.

Mr. CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau) said that cooperation to enable the developing countries to bridge the digital divide did not necessarily imply North-South cooperation since a number of countries, such as Malaysia or India, had the requisite means and know-how. More should be done to exploit the very real possibilities of South-South cooperation. With reference to the comments of the representative of the United States, he thought that a concordance of viewpoints between the secretariat and the Group of 77 on the question of bridging the digital divide was to be welcomed. It was important on such a crucial issue to set aside differences and focus on essentials in order to achieve the results that all in the end desired. The Council must cooperate in a new spirit to reform the United Nations system and make it more efficient in the pursuit of common goals.

Mr. LEVIN (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said the WSIS process had enabled world leaders to address for the first time the profound implications of the communications revolution for the future of society. It had also produced concrete and far-reaching results that should facilitate collective efforts to bridge the digital divide and clearly recognized the vital importance of ICTs to economic and social development.

The Tunis Agenda addressed three fundamental issues. It represented the first global agreement on key aspects of the communications revolution and initiated a process to discuss and resolve important public policy issues in the area of Internet governance. With regard to the digital divide, it enunciated important principles and actions for securing the necessary funding to provide all citizens with affordable access to communications. Lastly, it established mechanisms for turning principles into actions through a process for implementation and follow-up of the WSIS outputs.

The WSIS process had been a bold attempt to address the issues raised by ICTs in the context of a United Nations summit, while embracing an inclusive and multi-stakeholder

approach designed to reflect the multidisciplinary and cross-cutting nature of those issues. New processes had been developed to ensure that all stakeholders could express their views. The ITU had been assisted in Summit preparations by a tripartite executive secretariat including experts from international organizations, private companies and civil society. The two-phase process of WSIS, including the development of a database inventory of government and stakeholder activities since 2003 to implement the Geneva Action Plan, had facilitated concrete actions and genuine accountability. Finally WSIS had been largely self-financed, the major part of Summit expenses having been met through voluntary contributions and through the support of the host countries.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, WSIS made a clear distinction between implementation and follow-up. UNDP, UNESCO and ITU had been identified as the lead agencies for implementation, and provisional focal points had been designated for the 11 Action Lines. At the request of the WSIS, the CEB had established the United Nations Group on the Information Society to coordinate the implementation efforts of the United Nations system.

The Council had been given the main responsibility for system-wide follow-up of the Summit, including reform of the CSTD. Consistent with General Assembly resolution 57/270B, the Council could promote the importance of ICTs in meeting the internationally agreed development goals and encourage the mainstreaming of ICTs as part of global and national development strategies. It was also called upon to provide a multi-stakeholder forum for policy dialogue on emerging issues in the ICT field. The information exchange function would be closely linked to reform of the CSTD. In its reform of the Commission, the Council must be concerned to avoid duplication of efforts, to concentrate on WSIS follow-up activities and to take into account the role of the newly established United Nations Group on the Information Society.

The goal of bridging the digital divide was not beyond our reach. ITU estimated that every village in the world could be connected with an investment of about one billion dollars. The Information Society was in the process of reshaping our lives, societies and economies, and the ITU stood ready to continue its work of making the dream a reality for all.

Ms. BREINES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that any new terms of reference for the CSTD should take into account UNESCO's specific mandate in science so as to avoid any overlap. As the specialized agency of the United Nations system in the area of science, UNESCO assisted countries in formulating national science policies, strengthening university-industry partnership and promoting the use of ICTs to bridge the gap between science and technology - for example by developing open source software for virtual laboratories, establishing networks and UNESCO Chairs in science and technology, creating a World Academy of Young Scientists, and promoting ethics in science. As one of the agencies playing a lead role in the multi-stakeholder implementation of many action lines in the Geneva Plan of Action, UNESCO saw the CSTD as a functional intergovernmental commission operating primarily in the realm of integrated and coordinated follow-up.

Following the WSIS follow-up meetings in Geneva, UNESCO was organizing five other such meetings in October, in Paris on ethics, media, access and e-learning and in Beijing on e-science. UNESCO was ready to cooperate with UNCTAD in providing substantial inputs to the work of the CSTD and also, if deemed of interest, by sharing secretarial functions for the Commission. It already provided the secretariat to the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme, created in 2000 and composed of 26 member States, which took a great interest in WSIS-related activities and whose national committees constituted a growing locally-based network.

Mr. DAM (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)) said that, to ensure continuity between the WSIS process and its system-wide follow-up, civil society entities accredited to WSIS and its preparatory process should participate fully in the work of the CSTD. Only 10 per cent of WSIS-accredited civil society entities consisted of NGOs with consultative status with the Council. Following the procedure of the Johannesburg Conference, fast-track interim measures should be applied to enable WSIS-accredited entities to participate fully in all WSIS follow-up items on a two-year interim roster basis while applying for consultative status with the Council. The newly established Global Alliance for ICTs and Development, while it provided significant space for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue that would feed into the CSTD, should be regarded as one but not the only form of multi-stakeholder input to the CSTD.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.