

## **Speech by Professor Jane Lubchenco, WSIS, Geneva, 11 December, 2003**

Mr president, ministers, ladies and gentleman,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of ICSU: the International Council for Science. The ICSU membership includes over 100 science academies from all regions of the World and many international science Unions, ranging from chemistry to anthropology. The ICSU mission is to strengthen international science for the benefit of society.

Publicly funded science has a central role to play in the development of the Information Society. Many of the fundamental technological components of the Information Society, from electricity to the World Wide Web, were discovered or invented in academic laboratories. Even more important however, is the role that scientific knowledge plays as a driving force for social and economic development.

ICSU represented the international scientific community at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, where the digital divide – or knowledge divide – came out high on the agenda. We consider WSIS to be a continuation - a potentially a very major step - in the process towards a more equitable and sustainable society. In September this year, Kofi Annan put a challenge to the scientific community, when in an editorial in Science magazine he said “Your advocacy can help bring about a breakthrough in access to scientific knowledge”.

Access to scientific knowledge requires infrastructure – particularly in the Universities and centres of research that generate this knowledge and train the future generations; it requires human capacity; it also requires appropriate national and international IPR policies. There is a critical balance to be achieved between treating scientific data as a commodity for short-term economic return and ensuring universal and equitable access for research and education purposes.

Earlier today I participated in a ministerial round-table that was organized under the auspices of UNESCO. The theme was science, information society and the millennium goals. I could not possibly do justice to the discussions that we had in the short time available to me here, but the absolute requirement for access to scientific data and information in order to achieve the millennium goals was very strongly emphasised. This also came through in the Conference that was hosted by CERN on Monday and Tuesday and I expect that you will be hearing about that in more detail from the Director-General of CERN, Mr Maiani, tomorrow.

To finish on a very positive note, I would like to say that from the perspective of the international science community I am pleased that many of the issues that we have raised in the preparatory process for this Summit have been incorporated into the formal documents. It is encouraging to see that the important role of science in the information society is explicitly recognized in the declaration and that the plan of action addresses issues such as infrastructure for Universities and the role of the public domain, as well as a specific section on e-science. The challenge now is to turn these words into actions and, in this respect, the international science community is willing to play its part.