

## WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

### INTERSESSIONAL MEETING

UNESCO JULY 15 – 18 2003

#### STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Mr. President  
Ambassadors, Distinguished Delegates  
Representatives of the Civil Society  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, on behalf of the international scientific community, represented here by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council for Science (ICSU), the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), and the International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), is very pleased to have the opportunity to address this Intersessional Meeting of the WSIS here in Paris. UNESCO will also be making a separate statement.

Scientific research is one of the key factors underpinning the development of the Information Society. The fundamental technological components of the Information Society: electricity, radio waves, the World Wide Web (www) and the web browser were all first developed in academic laboratories. Ensuring equitable access to scientific knowledge is essential in order to achieve the Millennium goals and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) now offers incredible opportunities in this regard. Scientific research leads to the development of new technologies themselves and to the production of data and information that, when combined with these technologies, can be of huge benefit to society as a whole. **The essential role of science and scientists in building the Information Society should be clearly acknowledged in the declaration of principles and reflected in the plan of action from WSIS.**

**To this end the scientific community submitted its comments and input on the Draft Declaration & Action Plan (Document WSIS/PC-3/CONTR/113E) from which we would like to bring to the attention of the Member States, the following points:**

#### **Principles**

**Scientific knowledge and data are of enormous importance** in a global Information Society:

- To foster innovation and promote economic development

- For efficient and transparent decision-making, particularly at the governmental level
- For education and training

**Scientific data and information should be as widely available and affordable as possible:** the more people that are able to share them, the greater the positive effects and returns to society. Scientific knowledge is a “public good“.

The development of new ICTs opens up **unprecedented opportunities** to ensure universal and equitable access to scientific data and information and to enhance the global knowledge pool. However, **excessive privatization and commercialization of scientific data and information** is a serious threat to the realization of these opportunities for the benefit of society as a whole.

**Agenda for Action: The nine specific recommendations made in our submission can be summarized as:**

1. The urgent need to strengthen the public domain for science and for this to be taken on board in legislation
2. The need to provide affordable and equitable access to scientific data and information for the whole world
3. In order to bridge the knowledge divide, the existing target in the draft plan of action of providing affordable high speed internet access to all universities and research institutes within 5 years needs to be addressed.

We would like to thank those Member States which have already taken account of our recommendations in their contributions to the Draft Declaration & Action Plan and would like to invite the other Member States to give them serious consideration during the drafting sessions.

Finally, we would like to inform the Intersessional Meeting that the scientific organizations represented here, are organizing a high level conference on The Role of Science in the Information Society, in Geneva on the 8 - 9 December, immediately prior to the WSIS. The conference will take place at CERN, where the World Wide Web was born. The aim of this pre-summit conference is to bring together scientists, policy makers and other stakeholders from around the world to review the prospects that present developments in science and technology offer for the future of the Information Society.

The outcome will be presented to the WSIS, particularly through the Ministerial Round Table which UNESCO is organizing. The scientific community will also have a significant presence at the ICT4Development Platform.

Thank you for your kind attention.

