"Human Digital Solidarity Charter"

August 2010

We, the signatories to this charter,

- Considering that **the digital divide is essentially a development disparity in its social and economic dimensions**, and that Information and Communication Technologies can serve as a powerful means to increase productivity, promote economic growth, and improve quality of life for all,
- Convinced of the necessity of **achieving the Millennium Development Goals**, through mobilizing ICT capacities to promote the development objectives stated in the Millennium Declaration, namely eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving education for all, promoting gender equality, combating diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development, thereby strengthening the foundations of peace, justice and prosperity in the world,
- Being aware of universal human rights principles,
- Pursuant to **the results and recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society** in its two phases (Geneva 2003 – Tunis 2005), and in implementation of the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda 2005,
- In consolidation of the **mechanisms of international solidarity and cooperation**, through the contribution of all to achieving human well-being and ensuring universal, fair and equitable access to ICT services,
- Keen on ensuring universal access to ICT opportunities, and on promoting the contribution of all civilizations to the advent of a **universal civilization** based on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, solidarity, respect for differences, cultural and social diversity, and enhanced dialogue among people, nations and civilizations,
- Convinced that the digital divide limits the promotion of universal intellectual heritage, and reduces the ability to benefit from universal cultural heritage,
- Recognizing that the remarkable ICT and related fields evolution has generated an imbalanced development among countries and peoples, and within national and local communities, in terms of disparities among peoples and nations in access to technology, gender issues, generation gap, gap between those who have access to training and education and those who have not and needs of people with specific requirements,
- Given the fact that the global digital revolution marginalizes millions of men and women, the "information-poor", most of whom live in developing countries,
- Keen on ensuring universal access to information and knowledge, as a contribution to achieving autonomy and intellectual development for every individual,
- In consolidation of the role of local communities and civil society in social, political, economic and cultural action,

While insisting on the necessity that all stakeholders must act together so as to improve access to ICTs and to information and knowledge, build capacities, increase confidence and security in ICT use, create an empowering environment at all levels, promote and expand ICT applications, enhance and respect cultural diversity, promote ethics in the information society, and boost international and regional cooperation.

We convene on the necessity to
turn the digital divide into a digital opportunity
through the establishment of a
Human Digital Solidarity
based on the following fundamental principles:

Common principles

- The digital divide and the digital opportunity

The ICT evolution has had a deep impact on all fields of life. It is now one of the main pillars of society and one of the key components of comprehensive and sustainable development, hence the need to conceive new approaches to face poverty and exclusion.

From this perspective, the digital divide and its intensifying problems do place peoples, nations and communities in front of choices that can be taken only through **turning the digital divide into a digital opportunity**, laying the ground for the new economy based on modern and innovative technologies which should be used to promote development and serve the interests of all stakeholders.

- All belonging to a universal digital civilization

The information society should be based on respect for cultural identity, on diversity in terms of cultures, languages, traditions and religions, which helps in promoting coexistence and social integration, notably on the environmental preservation and sustainable development. The promotion and preservation of the various cultural identities and languages can only enrich all civilizations, and help develop a new perception of civilization, the **universal digital civilization**.

In order to build this universal digital civilization, it is necessary to benefit from cultural heritage and to safeguard it for the future by all appropriate means, especially through the use of ICTs which have now become a common denominator for the survival and growth of civilizations, and for the preservation of universal cultural heritage which is a crucial element for building human identity, promoting individual self-awareness, and linking society to its past.

- Access to information and knowledge

Individuals, organizations and societies should have access to knowledge, information and digital resources. To that end, it is necessary to :
- Provide access to general official information through various communication resources, establish legislation on access to information, and safeguard universal heritage through digitalization,
- Promote research and development in order to facilitate access to ICTs for all including for disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable social categories,
- Provide public community, multi-purpose and potentially sustainable access points to various communication means, at reasonable costs, especially in rural and remote areas,
- Encourage initiatives aiming to facilitate access at reasonable costs, and where possible free access, to scientific journals and books, and to scientific archives.

- Fundamental values : Freedom, democracy, equality and solidarity

The universal digital civilization should contribute to curbing poverty and disparities, respecting peace, and defending fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy, equality, solidarity, tolerance, and common responsibility, including respect for nature and the environment, and the protection of human dignity and value, while taking into consideration differences among people.
In the process of building the information society, it is necessary to act, in an equitable manner, to ensure democracy, justice and equality in access to ICT infrastructure, services and applications. This action involves :
- Promoting gender equality, while providing maximum protection to the family so that it can accomplish its role in society,
- Preserving individual privacy, opening up wide prospects for emerging generations, and protecting the dignity of the elderly,
- Providing wide education and training opportunities, in order to allow for access to knowledge by the means of ICTs.
- Recognizing the needs of people with specific needs, and providing the necessary means to offer them access to ICTs.
- At the same time, all stakeholders involved in building the information society should take adequate preventive action against the misuse of ICTs, such as acts driven by racial discrimination, and the related forms of intolerance, hatred and violence, and all forms of child abuse and human trafficking.

- Need for capacity-building

Each individual has the right to develop the necessary skills so as to take full advantage of the information society, hence the need to build capacities and spread knowledge of ICTs. From this perspective, it is necessary to :
- Develop local policies to guarantee the integration of ICTs into education and training at all levels,
- Enhance electronic literacy skills for all,

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- Meet the need for adult literacy, and provide youth with the necessary knowledge and skills for ICT use,
- Eradicate gender discrimination, in terms of ICT education and training, and provide equal training opportunities,
- Offer local communities, especially in the rural and under-served areas, the means for access to ICTs, and encourage the production of useful contents having a social character, for the benefit of all.

- Empowering environment

The social, economic and environmental benefits of the information society require the establishment of an empowering environment based on a political, legal and regulatory framework, consolidating the gains of society and social progress, and characterized by transparency and the promotion of competition. This requires :

- Establishing national strategies, including e-government strategies, so as to promote transparency, competence and democracy in public management,
- Establishing policies that promote the development of ICTs, the encouragement of project promoters, and the enhancement of innovation and investment, while granting a particular attention to the participation of women,
- Supporting global and regional initiatives to enable and enhance access to and use of ICT and involvement in the knowledge economy by all members of society,
- Designing specific training programs for ICT use, in order to meet the educational needs of IT professionals.

- Building confidence and security in ICT use

Confidence and security are basic foundations for the information society. It is, therefore, necessary to :
. Increase the confidence of users, reassure them, and provide data and network security,
. Prevent, detect and counter cyber-crimes and ICT misuse,
. Enhance the education of users and raising their awareness concerning online privacy and the means of its protection,
. Increase the exchange of information on new practices in terms of data and network security,
. Develop secure and reliable applications to facilitate online transactions.

Solidarity in building the information and knowledge society

- Digital solidarity and the building of a balanced space for communication and knowledge, based on justice and equality

The building of a fair and comprehensive information society requires that adequate conditions be provided for the mobilization of human, financial and technological resources, thereby ensuring an inclusive information society. Moreover, close cooperation among all stakeholders, at the national, regional and

international levels, is a vital element for implementing programs that lead to the achievement of this objective. It is necessary, in this context, to use the existing means and mechanisms with higher competence, and to create new mechanisms when necessary, while focusing on the use of ICTs to serve development.

To ensure solidarity in building the information society,

- Countries and international organizations should provide adequate conditions for more resources to be mobilized more effectively for funding development, as detailed in the "Monterrey Consensus",
- Countries should establish national mechanisms for solidarity so as to ensure universal access for all the under-served rural and urban areas, and meet the needs of all social categories, in order to bridge the digital divide,
- Developed nations should intensify their efforts to honor their international commitments in terms of development funding, including those stated in the "Monterrey Consensus", as developed nations were urged to exert efforts so as to provide a part of their GDP as a development aid to developing countries, including the least developed ones.
- Developing countries should step up efforts so that they attract large investments by local and foreign private sector, for ICT projects, by providing a propitious investment climate that is characterized by transparency and stability, which allows anticipating the conditions prevailing in it.
- Developed nations and international funding organizations should respond to the strategies and priorities of ICT use for purposes of development, and help developing countries formulate and implement their national electronic strategies, based on the priorities of their national development plans.
- Developed nations should increase efforts to provide more financial resources for developing countries, in an endeavor to mobilize ICTs in the service of development.
- ICT industry in their product renewal cycles should take resource constraints in developing countries into account and increase efforts to create resource economic hardware and software.

- Digital solidarity mechanisms

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and materializing the main principles of **human digital solidarity** depend essentially on the universality of these objectives, and the need to establish an efficient international and regional cooperation among governments, the private sector, civil society and all stakeholders, including international financial institutions.

To build a universal and inclusive information society, and to eradicate economic, social and cultural disparities among the "info-rich" and the "info-poor", action should be taken to establish international approaches and mechanisms, including financial and technical aid.

It is also necessary to enhance partnership between the North and the South on the one hand, and between the public and private sectors on the other hand, to develop a new pattern of partnership in which all stakeholders, from the public and private sectors, and from the North and the South, assume their appropriate role in ensuring the necessary complementariness for building the information society.

It is also necessary to consolidate the existing mechanisms at the level of the United Nations, so that they can implement projects that meet the requirements of building a fair and inclusive information society, based on national, regional and international solidarity.

Annex 1 to the Digital Human Solidarity Charter

Signatories

AWO – Arab Women Organization
The Supreme Council of the Arab Women Organization adopted the Human Digital Solidarity Charter at it's meeting on xx October 2010 in Tunis, Tunisia.

IFIP – International Federation for Information Processing
The General Assembly of the International Federation for Information Processing adopted the Human Digital Solidarity Charter at it's meeting on 25 September 2010 in Brisbane, Australia.

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Annex 2 to the Digital Human Solidarity Charter

Initiatives

This annex to the Digital Human Solidarity Charter lists a number of initiatives that are pursued by the signatories of the charter in order to achieve it's goals.

IFIP – World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR)

Recognizing the developmental opportunities offered by digital technologies and the need for developing countries and developed countries to collaborate to exploit such opportunities, IFIP undertakes a number of activities under the umbrella of the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR).

The overall goal of WITFOR is to assist developing countries in developing and implementing sustainable strategies for the application of ICT and to share experiences that will help to bridge the digital divide and improve the quality of life. The specific goals are:
- To share and discuss experiences in drafting and implementing ICT policies;
- To share and discuss experiences in initiating and implementing ICT projects;
- To present and discuss research concerning the overall goal.

The activities are guided by the World Summit on the Information Society's (WSIS) Plan of Action in order to help achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

WITFOR examines different initiatives on effective, context sensitive development and use of ICT applications, access to quality relevant information, and the development of "fair use principles". In particular the WITFOR events are intended to:
- help put ICT-enabled development initiatives on the agenda of different organizations, governmental bodies, and groups currently involved in information and communications technologies;
- work with different groups to ensure that the issue of ICT diffusion and sustainable effective use is on the agenda of senior policy makers and political leaders;
- assist international organizations and donor agencies to build issues of the spread of ICTs and access to information into their loan and funding programs with adequate financial and institutional allocations;
- develop guidelines on these issues and advise governments, to formulate and follow the best strategy for the use of ICT in order to achieve global ICT-equity.

The forum will address issues critical to developing countries, such as the application of ICT in fighting HIV/Aids and other health issues, poverty, access to education, empowerment, environment, as well as social, ethical, and legal consequences of IT. It will also showcase leading edge ICT solutions for economic development, as well as best practice projects from around the world.

The concept of WITFOR is to bring together politicians, policymakers, researchers and practitioners from developed, emerging and developing countries with the aim of discussing together ICT policies and practical experiences.

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