

Geneva, June 16th, 2003

Bertrand Ramcharan
Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

RE: Human Rights and the World Summit on the Information Society

Your Excellency Mr. Bertrand Ramcharan,

The under-signed civil society organizations strongly encourage your active participation in the preparatory committee and summit meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society, taking place in September and December 2003, respectively. Human rights are an essential requirement of the Information Society, as elaborated in the draft declaration of the WSIS (WSIS/PCIP/DT/1-E):

10. The essential requirements for the development of an equitable Information Society include: The respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Notably the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to hold opinions without interference and seek to, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers in accordance with article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to unhindered access by individuals to communication media and information sources...

As the United Nations highest human rights official, your good offices are needed to ensure that human rights language in the WSIS process is comprehensive, strong and consistent with resolutions and decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and build upon human rights language developed through the various UN world summits and conferences.

Civil society organizations view ICTs as having both tremendous applications that enhance human rights, such as through the rapid dissemination of action alerts and instant access to human rights information, and disturbing capacities to greatly diminish human rights, such as by providing governments with means enabling intrusive surveillance and monitoring and therefore, repression.

Only through the active participation of governments, civil society, and international human rights institutions such as your Office can these ICTs be best harnessed to maximize the protection of human rights worldwide.

We hope the Office of the High Commissioner will become involved in this event and we look forward to our ongoing collaboration in ensuring that the World Summit on the Information Society has a strong human rights focus. In particular we are hoping that you personally will be able to attend the Third Prep Com, to take place in Geneva in September

15-27, 2003, and we look forward to meeting with you at that time. We also hope that the Office of the High Commissioner will be prominent in the deliberations of the Summit in December, and that we will harness the potential of information technology to serve the cause of human rights to the Summit in Tunisia and beyond.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Rik Panganiban, World Federalist Movement

Rikke Frank Jorgensen, Danish Institute for Human Rights, co-coordinator of the WSIS Human Rights Caucus

Meryem Marzouki, Imaginons un Réseau Internet Solidaire, co-coordinator of the WSIS Human Rights Caucus

Copies:

Mr. Adama Samassekou, President of the WSIS Preparatory Process

Mr. Pierre Gagné, Director of the Executive Secretariat

List of organizations endorsing this letter:

1. Abantu for Development (www.abantu.org). Diana Mercorios: diana@abantu.org
2. African Youth Initiative (Ghana, www.ayinitiative.net). 'Gbenga Sesan: gbengasesan@yahoo.com
3. Article 19 (www.article19.org). John M. Barker: johnb@article19.org
4. Association Femme et Promotion (AFEPRO, Congo Democratic Republic). Josée Ngalula: afepro@yahoo.fr
5. Association Malienne pour le Suivi et l'Orientation des pratiques Traditionnelles (AMSOPT, Mali, www.famafrique.org/femafrfranc/amsopt.html). Maiga Aminata Ahoudou: amsopt@datatech.toolnet.org
6. Association for Progressive Communications (APC, www.apc.org). Karen Banks; karenb@gn.apc.org
7. Carrefour Mondial de l'Internet Citoyen (CMIC, Canada, www.globalcn.org). Alain Ambrosi: ambrosia@web.ca
8. Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT, USA, www.cdt.org). James X. Dempsey: jdempsey@cdt.org
9. Center for Development of International Law (CDIL, www.edrc.net/cdil.html). William R. Pace
10. ConcienciAccion.org (USA, www.concienciaccion.org). Angela-Jo Medina: conciencia2@concienciaccion.org
11. Consumer Federation of America (CFA, USA, www.consumerfed.org). Mark Silbergeld: msilbergeld@yahoo.com
12. Consumer Project on Technology (CPTech, USA, www.cptech.org). Manon Anne Ress: manon.ress@cptech.org
13. Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR, www.cpsr.org). William J. McIver: mciver@albany.edu
14. Cyber-Rights & Cyber-Liberties (CR&CL, United Kingdom, www.cyber-rights.org). Yaman Akdeniz: lawya@cyber-rights.org
15. Danish Institute for Human Rights (Denmark, www.humanrights.dk). Rikke Frank Jorgensen: rfj@humanrights.dk

16. Digital Rights (Denmark, www.digitalrights.dk). Rikke Frank Jorgensen: rfj@digitalrights.dk
17. Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC, USA, www.epic.org). Cedric Laurant: chlaurant@epic.org
18. European Digital Rights (EDRi, www.edri.org). Meryem Marzouki: Meryem.Marzouki@edri.org
19. Forum-Asia (Thailand, www.forumasia.org). Sacha Jotisialikorn: sacha@forumasia.org
20. Foundation for Information Policy Research (FIPR, United Kingdom, www.fipr.org). Ian Brown: ian@fipr.org
21. Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA, Philippines). Alan Alegre alalegre@fma.ph
22. General Board of Church and Society, the United Methodist Church (UMC-GBCS, USA, www.umc-gbcs.org). Liberato Bautista kstone@umc-gbcs.org
23. Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries (HIVOS, The Netherlands, www.hivos.nl). Paul Maassen: p.maassen@hivos.nl
24. Human Rights Information Network (HURINET, Nigeria). John Ntan: jntan@mail.wangonet.org
25. Imaginons un Réseau Internet Solidaire (IRIS, France, www.iris.sgdg.org). Meryem Marzouki: Meryem.Marzouki@iris.sgdg.org
26. Internet Society, Bulgarian Chapter (ISOC-BG, Bulgaria, www.isoc.bg). Veni Markovski: veni@veni.com
27. McGill University, Office of International Research (Canada, www.mcgill.ca/international). James Archibald: jak.archibald@mcgill.ca
28. NEXUS Research Cooperative (Ireland, www.nexus.ie). Sean O Siochru: sean@nexus.ie
29. Online Policy Group, Inc. (OPG, USA, www.onlinepolicy.org). Will Doherty: doherty@onlinepolicy.org
30. Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT, www.omct.org). Christine Ferrier: cf@omct.org
31. Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (Nigeria, www.pin.itgo.com). 'Gbenga Sesan: gbengasesan@yahoo.com
32. Privacy Ukraine (Ukraine, www.internetrights.org.ua). Andriy Pazyuk: privacy@ukrnet.net
33. PromoCulture/Centre Africain d'Échanges culturels (Congo Democratic Republic, www.web-africa.org/promoculture). Baudouin Schombe: sam_bj2000@yahoo.fr
34. Rights & Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, ICHRDD, Canada, www.ichrdd.ca). Diana Bronson: dbronson@ichrdd.ca
35. SANGONeT (South Africa, www.sangonet.org.za). Suraya Bibi Khan: sbk@sangonet.org.za
36. Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations (Switzerland, www.swisscoalition.ch). Michel Egger: mm.egger@bluewin.ch
37. Swiss Internet User Group (SIUG, Switzerland, www.siug.ch). Felix Rauch: felix.rauch@siug.ch
38. Technology for People Foundation (TEA, Hungary, hu.bigbrotherawards.org). Zoltan Galantai zoltan.galantai@bigbrotherawards.org
39. Union for Democratic Communications (UDC, USA, www.udc.org). Lisa McLaughlin: mclauglm@po.muohio.edu
40. VIBE!AT (Austria, www.vibe.at). Andreas Krisch: andreas.krisch@vibe.at
41. Virtual Activism (www.virtualactivism.org). Marlyn Tadros: info@virtualactivism.net
42. World Catholic Association for Communication (SIGNIS, www.signis.net). Jim McDonnell: jim.mcdonnel@signis.net
43. World Federalist Movement (WFM, www.wfm.org). Rik Panganiban: rikp@bluewin.ch