Carthage Declaration of WFEO on the Digital Divide

World Congress on the Digital Divide
Tunis, October 16, 2003

We, the representatives of the engineering and technology community gathered in Tunis October 14- 16, 2003 as part of the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, with the active participation of representatives from :

- The Tunisian, Swiss and Senegalese governments ;
- The International Telecommunications Union ;
- UNESCO, the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa and western Asia, The International Satellite Organization, the Technical Park of Trieste, the World Innovation Foundation ;

have agreed upon the following principles :

- **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer enormous potential to generate and distribute wealth** and contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and World Summit for Sustainable Development Plan of Action.
- **It is essential that the digital gap between the « info rich » and the « info poor » be closed.** The digital gap contributes to the widening of the economic gap and aggravates exclusion and marginalization.
- **We express our strong concerns** regarding the growing disparities of network access. The disparities extend beyond the North-South and exist within countries, between generations, and different social classes.
- **We are convinced of the potential importance of the World Summit on the Information Society** as a forum for debating the issues and advancing viable solutions by engaging the public/private sector in partnerships.
- **We emphasize the proven ability of innovation and research-development** to find solutions to problems generated by the new Information Society.
- **The development of technology must not be guided solely by profit ;** science, engineering and technology must serve the needs of people.
- **We affirm our determination to actively work as partners to reduce the Digital Divide.** Engineers are on the front lines, their fundamental role is to adapt science for the benefit of people, in particular the poor.
- **We affirm our vision of the Information Society** : a society which is open and inclusive promotes the diffusion of knowledge and facilitates the sharing of information. A society that values the development of human beings above all else, one that respects cultural and linguistic diversity.
- **We call on governments to agree to commit resources to create a vehicle for financing low cost high speed network access** that enables the sharing of knowledge and technologies meeting basic human needs for water, food, energy and health. We also call for using the Solidarity Fund created by United Nations in order to meet above mentioned goals.

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