



## **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) - preparation for the December 2003 Summit**

IFLA is heavily engaged in contributing to the process that leads up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), to take place in Geneva in December 2003, eventually followed by a second phase in Tunis in November 2005.

We are now entering the last preparation stage for the December Summit and I urge you to do everything you can to promote the role of libraries by lobbying your national delegations to this United Nations conference. The 3<sup>rd</sup> preparatory committee meeting - *PrepCom 3* - will be held 15-26 September 2003 in Geneva and IFLA will again be represented.

There are currently two documents available which are of prime importance for *PrepCom-3*, and for the agenda of the WSIS. They are the *Declaration of Principles* and the *Action Plan* -- [www.ifla.org/files/assets/wsis/Documents/wsis2605.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/wsis/Documents/wsis2605.pdf)

### **Declaration of Principles**

Following the comments on we submitted on an earlier draft, it is pleasing to note that there are some stronger references to libraries in the latest version of the Draft Declaration of Principles -- [www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_single.asp?lang=en&id=894](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single.asp?lang=en&id=894) But these could be even stronger if we succeed in convincing government delegations that the following points should be included:

19. The last sentence of section 19 reads: "In disadvantaged areas, public community access points, such as post offices, libraries, schools, etc., can provided effective means for ensuring Universal Access."

It is proposed to add:

**Libraries in particular provide an effective environment for making use of ICT to access information and for learning the skills required for effective searching.**

23. The last sentence of section 23 reads: "Public institutions such as libraries and archives can function as trustworthy information brokers to guarantee free access".

It is proposed to change this into:

**Libraries and archives play a key role in the information society. They guarantee free access and can function as trustworthy information brokers.**

### **Action Plan**

We can also be quite pleased about the many references to libraries in the latest version of the Draft Plan of Action [www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_single.asp?lang=en&id=944](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single.asp?lang=en&id=944) but, again here, in contact with your national delegations you could try and have some more emphasis on

the role that libraries can play. The current references are listed in the annex, and I would like to make the following suggestions for more focused texts:

12.d) "Revise the concept of universal access to reflect advances and opportunities offered by new technology, market development and changes in user demand."

It is proposed to add:

**Libraries should be involved in this process.**

13.g) "Promote joint use of traditional media and new technologies."

It is proposed to add:

**Libraries are currently enabling this combined usage on a large scale and are prepared to share their experience in this matter.**

15.e) "Establish a programme, funded by the UN (or its agencies), to create a worldwide portal to open access journals and books, and an open archive for scientific information."

It is proposed to add:

**Libraries are the institutions to provide that access.**

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to remind you of our pre-Summit conference "Libraries @ the Heart of the Information Society", to be held in Geneva, 3 and 4 November 2003. Your association has been invited to take part. Representatives of the library field will be enabled to meet with delegates to the WSIS of their national governments. Please consider sending one or more representatives to that event.

**Ross Shimmon**

Secretary General

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## **Annex**

References to (the role of) libraries in the WSIS Draft Plan of Action, version 22 August 2003  
[www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_single.asp?lang=en&id=944](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single.asp?lang=en&id=944)

9.e) All public libraries to be connected by 2006 and all cultural centres, museums and archives by 2010.

11.c) Improve connectivity for institutions accessible to the public, such as schools, universities, libraries, post offices, community centres, museums, etc.

16. All stakeholders should support the diverse network of existing **libraries and archives** and should support those countries that plan to develop their own. Information and records management is a necessary condition for good governance. A modest level of investment in new technology, training and above all, content provision could kick-start the information revolution in many regions by broadening access and developing skills:

16.a) Governments should establish multi-purpose community public access points, providing affordable or free-of-charge access for their citizens to the Internet, and possessing sufficient capacity to provide assistance to users, in libraries, educational institutions, public

administrations or other public places.

16.c) Creation and development of a public library service, adapted to the digital era should be supported.

20.b) Design specific training programmes in the use of ICTs and revise curricula for content workers such as archivists, librarians, scientists, teachers, journalists and other media workers.

41.d) Develop national policies and laws to ensure that libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions can play their full role of content—including traditional knowledge—providers in the information society, more particularly by providing continued access to recorded information.

41.e) Develop an international framework for the preservation of digital heritage, including developing systems for ensuring continued access to archived digital information and multimedia content, and support archives and libraries as the memory of humankind.

**Latest Revision:** *September 15, 2003* Copyright ©  
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