UNITED NATIONS

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**

Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and
the Caribbean for the World Summit on the Information Society

Bávaro, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, 29-31 January 2003

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A. BACKGROUND

In resolution 56/183, adopted at its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the pivotal role of the United Nations in promoting development. The General Assembly also welcomed the resolution adopted by the Council of the International Telecommunication Union at its 2001 session, wherein the Council endorsed the proposal of the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union to hold the World Summit on the Information Society at the highest possible level in two phases, the first in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005.

In this connection, the General Assembly encouraged effective contributions from and the active participation of all relevant United Nations bodies in the preparatory process of the Summit and invited other intergovernmental organizations, including the private sector and civil society, to do likewise. For its part, the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force urged Governments to provide unflagging support for efforts to organize and hold regional preparatory conferences.

In accordance with the above-mentioned recommendations and after consultation with the other Governments of the region, the Government of the Dominican Republic offered to host the Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the World Summit on the Information Society. Pursuant to a request from the Government of the Dominican Republic, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) will cooperate in the organization and conduct of this event. The Regional Preparatory Conference will provide an opportunity to prepare the region's contribution to the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee, to be held in Geneva in February 2003, and to progress towards the formulation of a regional position for the first phase of the Summit, scheduled for December 2003 in Geneva.

B. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1.   Election of officers

2.   Adoption of the agenda

3.   Opening meeting

4.   The transition to the digital era

5.   Presentations of international organizations

6.   General policy statements

7.   The transition to the information society

8.   Analysis of the characteristics of regulatory frameworks necessary for the development of the information society in Latin America and the Caribbean

9.   Analysis of the existing stock of human capital and what is required in that regard to meet the challenges posed by the new information society

10.   Analysis of the types and amount of financing needed in order for the Latin American and Caribbean countries to join the information society

11.   Presentation of the conclusions of the workshop

12.   Submission of a proposed plan of action and set of principles to serve as guidelines for the development of an information society in the region

13.   Adoption of the Bávaro Plan of Action and Principles

C. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1.   Election of officers

The heads of delegation of the States members of ECLAC will elect a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur. These officers will preside over the rest of the proceedings.

2.   Adoption of the agenda

The heads of delegation of the States members of ECLAC will have before them the provisional agenda (LC/G.2192(CONF.91/1)) for their consideration and subsequent adoption following any modifications they may deem appropriate.

3.   Opening meeting

The opening meeting of the Regional Preparatory Conference will be attended by authorities of the Dominican Republic, ECLAC officials and representatives of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

4.   The transition to the digital era

An international expert in this field will give a presentation on the transition to the digital era and the major activities being carried out to reflect this new reality.

5.   Presentations of international organizations

Representatives of international organizations operating in the region have been invited to convey their points of view on the transition of Latin America and the Caribbean to the information society and to indicate the support they can provide during this phase. The Commission will then present a document prepared specifically for the Conference.

6.   General policy statements

The heads of delegation of the States members of ECLAC will be invited to make general policy statements on their Governments' vision of the information society.

Delegations are requested to limit their statements to five minutes each so that the work of the Conference can be completed on schedule.

7.   The transition to the information society

Representatives of civil society, the private sector and the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Network will present their views on the subject.

8.   Analysis of the characteristics of regulatory frameworks necessary for the development of the information society in Latin America and the Caribbean

Under this agenda item, participants will consider what characteristics the necessary regulatory frameworks should have in order to foster and facilitate both the flow of information through digital channels and access to such information and to safeguard the basic rights underpinning the information society, including intellectual property, respect for multiculturalism, freedom of expression and consumer protection.

9.   Analysis of the existing stock of human capital and what is required in that regard to meet the challenges posed by the new information society

Alternatives for strengthening human capital in the region by building the capacity to further the development of the information society will be studied under this agenda item. Strategies for ensuring that the professionals working in this field remain at the service of the countries of the region will also be examined. Lastly, in the interests of achieving equity in the information society, special attention will be paid to determining what measures are needed to ensure that all members of the population receive an education and training that will enable them to take advantage of the benefits provided by this new society.

10.   Analysis of the types and amount of financing needed in order for the Latin American and Caribbean countries to join the information society

In the first instance, participants will examine financial architectural models that could provide the necessary resources for achieving a form of development compatible with the requirements of the information society, and the necessary financing modalities for ensuring that this society is sustainable and equitable for the countries of the region. Secondly, international financial institutions that operate in the region will be invited to present an analysis of the role they can and should play in providing financing to facilitate the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean in the digital era.

11.   Presentation of the conclusions of the workshop

The conclusions reached at the workshop held will be presented for the information and consideration of the participants in the Conference.

12. **Submission of a proposed plan of action and set of principles to serve as guidelines for the development of an information society in the region**

The Chairperson will submit a preliminary proposal for a plan of action for consideration by the representatives of participating countries. This proposal will set forth the main conclusions relating to the three preceding agenda items together with the principles that should govern the information society. These principles will be identified primarily on the basis of the discussion of agenda item 4.

13. **Adoption of the Bávaro Plan of Action and Principles**

The Conference will culminate in the adoption of the Plan of Action agreed upon by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Plan of Action will be aimed at achieving the region's integration into the information society in parallel with its pursuit of sustainable and equitable economic and social development.

D. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The ECLAC secretariat has seen fit to structure the working sessions around three panels on the following topics: regulatory framework, financing and human capital. Each of these panels will be led by experts of the highest level in the field, whose presentations will provide input for the intergovernmental discussions. In turn, these debates will serve as the basis for the adoption of a joint regional position which will be presented at the next phase of the World Summit.

E. DOCUMENTATION

1. For the purposes of this Conference, the Commission is preparing a document entitled "Road maps towards an Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean" (LC/G.2195(CONF.91/3)), which will be available as from approximately 15 December 2002 on the INDOTEL web page (www.indotel.org.do/wsis) and on the ECLAC web page (www.cepal.cl).

2. For participants wishing to obtain further background material on the information society and on other issues relevant to the Conference, ECLAC suggests the following bibliography:

Jorge Katz and Martin Hilbert, Building an Information Society: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective. Libros de la CEPAL series, No. 72 (LC/G.2199-P)

ECLAC, Latin America and the Caribbean in the transition to a knowledge-based society: an agenda for public policy (LC/L.1383)

ECLAC, Globalization and Development (LC/G.2157(SES.29/3))

Economic and Social Council, *Development and International Cooperation in the Twenty-first Century: The Role of Information Technology in the Context of a Knowledge-based Global Economy*, Report of the Secretary-General

DOT FORCE, *Digital Opportunities for All: Meeting the Challenge/Report of the Digital* Opportunity *Task Force*

Digital Opportunity Initiative, Creating *a Development Dynamic: Final Report of the Digital Opportunity Initiative*

Commission of the European Communities, *eEurope 2005: An information society for all* (COM(2002) 263 final)

OECD, *Understanding the Digital Divide*

ILO, World *Employment Report, 2001. Life at Work in the Information Economy*

Martin R. Hilbert, *From* Industrial *Economics to Digital Economics: An Introduction to the Transition,* Desarrollo productivo series, No 100 (LC/L.1497-P)

Martin R. Hilbert, *Latin* America *on Its Path Into the Digital Age: Where Are We?*, Desarrollo productivo series, No 104 (LC/L.1555-P)

SocInfo (Programa Sociedade da Informação Brasil), *Sociedade da Informação no Brasil – Livro Verde*

UNCTAD, *UNCTAD E-commerce and Development Report 2001* (UNCTAD/SDTE/ECB/1)

UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001. Making New Technologies Work for Human Development*

UN ICT Task Force, "Global database", *Development Gateway: where worlds of knowledge meet* (http://www.developmentgateway.org/)

UNRISD, Cynthia Hewitt, *The Development Divide in a Digital Age*

Declaration of Florianópolis, June 2000

Economic and Social Council, *Ministerial Declaration on Development and International Cooperation* in *the XXI Century: the Role of IT in the Context of a Knowledge-based Global Economy*

Declaration of Itacuruçá: Latin America and the Caribbean's Recommendations to UNESCO's III International Congress on *Cyberspace's Ethical, Legal and Societal Challenges*

LACTIC 2000, *Acta del* primer *taller Latinoamericano y del Caribe de tecnología de información y comunicación*

Comisión Interamericana de Telecomunicaciones, *Conectando las Américas*

Rio de Janeiro Declaration on ICT for Development, Intergovernmental meeting Information and Communication Technologies for Development: the view of developing countries

DOT Force (G8 Genoa), Plan of Action: Framework for Implementation, "To foster an environment of sustainable social and economic development (including poverty alleviation)"

UN ICT Task Force, *Plan of Action*

UN ICT TF, *First Meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force Latin American and Caribbean Regional Network*

UIT, *Istanbul Declaration*, World Telecommunication Development Conference 2002

European Union - Latin America and Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on Information Society, *Seville Statement*

Executive Secretary of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), *Progress Report on Preparatory Activities at* the *Local, National, Regional and International Level and Selected Activities by Major Stakeholders*

WSIS, *Report of the First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee*