

TERRAVIVA

THE INDEPENDENT DAILY OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY • LE QUOTIDIEN INDÉPENDANT DU SOMMET MONDIAL SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE L'INFORMATION

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Pending: Schooling for Girls

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched its annual report on the state of the world's children, Thursday. The document makes a strong case for universal education, gender equality and women's empowerment.

In his foreword to the report, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan states that no other policy is likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality and promote health more effectively than the education of girls. At present, some 121 million children around the world still have no access to education.

UNICEF states that despite thousands of projects aimed at promoting gender parity around the world, this remains as elusive as ever — "and girls continue to systematically lose out on the benefits that an education affords". (WJ)



Some cyber citizens, like those pictured on this page, employ the tools of the information society to create new art forms or alternative ways of organising their lives. Others log on in the hope that technology will provide an avenue for alerting people to the repression that they suffer daily, but are forbidden to discuss publicly. These individuals are described in our cover story.

As should be abundantly clear by now, the vast majority of humanity still does not possess the ability to

get wired when it wishes – or even when it has to. People who stress that communication is a right must be allowed every opportunity to raise their voice on the matter.

Yet even as this newspaper went to press Wednesday night, individuals who claimed to be representing the interests of Tunisia were collecting armfuls of earlier issues of Terra Viva — this to prevent summit-goers from reading articles that we have published on efforts to suppress freedom of information in that country.

Two nations that have been on opposing ends of discussions leading up to the information society summit signalled Wednesday that they are not waiting for international consensus before they move to better the lot of humanity in the information society. (See those reports on pages 2 and 4.)

U.S. officials said Washington will donate 400 million dollars to spur their companies' investment in ICT in developing countries. And South African Communications Minister Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri said her

government was investigating ways to improve the continent's energy supply, needed to fuel the communications infrastructure. It is hoped that this move will attract foreign investment.

While we are probably familiar with the "digital divide" between North and South, a gulf also exists between old and young — even in countries of the North, as our report on page nine explains. Governments, alerted to this fact, have now begun investigating how to bridge this divide.

CHINE ET TUNISIE

Les Etats-voyous de l'information

Ce ne sont pas les seuls ennemis de la libre information. Mais la Chine et la Tunisie cristallisent les plus virulentes condamnations de la société civile au SMSI, alors que les Etats démocratiques ne semblent pas en faire un plat.

Point commun des régimes totalitaires de Pékin et de Tunis: des systèmes sophistiqués de désinformation. Ils ont été comparés par des opposants chinois et tunisiens, réunis à Palexpo par Marco Cappato, député européen du Parti radical transnational. Avec cette question centrale du journaliste dissident Omar Mestiri: pourquoi la communauté internationale qui impose des règles contraignantes et des sanctions en matière financière et commerciale, reste-t-elle si peu exigeante face aux violations des libertés et des droits humains?

Pour Erping Zhang, porte-parole du mouvement persécuté Falun Gong, le droit à l'information n'est pas seulement un droit de l'homme, c'est une question de sécurité mondiale. Ainsi, l'épidémie SARS, détectée le 1^{er} novembre 2002, n'a été annoncée dans les médias chinois que fin avril 2003. "Non seulement des milliers de gens sont morts faute d'avoir été prévenus, mais d'autres pays comme le Canada ont été infectés par des migrants chinois", indique l'opposant. Il demande à tous ceux qui établissent des relations culturelles, scientifiques ou commerciales avec la Chine d'être très fermes sur les droits de l'homme.

Le Falun Gong, mouvement bouddhique laïque, qui enseigne des exercices semblables au yoga et des principes éthiques dans la vie quotidienne avait selon Zhang été adopté par 70 millions de Chinois avant d'être brutalement interdit et pourchassé en juillet 1999. A ce jour il y aurait plusieurs milliers de pratiquants morts de tortures et des centaines de milliers dans des camps ou des asiles psychiatriques. A cela

s'ajoute une campagne massive de désinformation, faisant passer ce mouvement comme une "secte maléfique" dans les médias. (voir www.flgjustice.org)

La censure chinoise d'Internet s'est perfectionnée après cette date, confirme le professeur d'informatique Shiyu Zhou, de l'université étatsunienne de Rutgers. Comme ce fut le cas dans l'histoire (l'Empire romain contre les chrétiens, les nazis contre les juifs), la méthode associe violence et mensonges pour justifier la destruction de groupes non violents. Mais la "censure technologique" frappe aussi les autres dissidents intellectuels, syndicalistes, etc. Elle prend quatre formes pour contrôler 60 millions d'internautes chinois:

- filtrage des sites web par mot-clé (ex: "démocratie", "Falun"), bloqués dès qu'un tel mot est repéré.
- blocage des sites d'info (BBC news, CNN, MIT) ou détournement (infiltration des carnets d'adresse des mails Yahoo ou Hotmail).

- pression sur les fournisseurs d'accès ou d'information: ainsi Yahoo serait prié d'écarter des infos hostiles à la Chine.

- Piratage des sites critiques hors de Chine. De même, les e-mails privés d'opposants à l'étranger sont inondés de "spams" et de virus.

"En Tunisie, l'appareil de désinformation équivaut aux forces de sécurité françaises pour une population six fois moindre", explique Omar Mestiri, rédacteur en chef du e-magazine tunisien Kalima (www.kalimatunisie.com).

La Tunisie est selon lui un modèle sophistiqué qui fait école dans le monde arabe: "Les dictatures rétro genre Irak, Syrie, Arabie saoudites appartiennent au siècle passé. Le paradoxe tunisien apparaît comme une économie moderne et dynamique, avec des progrès sociaux (femmes, santé, éducation) Un seul détail: depuis 1956, les citoyens n'ont jamais pu choisir leur gouvernement. "Les besoins matériels satisfaits, l'opinion est traitée comme un luxe!"

Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri

Looking Beyond the Digital Fund

“I think what people are saying is that the way the Internet is governed should not be subject to the law of one state. Because, should there be conflict, a developing country like Bangladesh would have to sue in the courts of the United States. I mean, really! Give us a break.” - South Africa Minister of Communications Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri

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AWC Information Service is a media organisation whose mission is to promote equal gender development through the media and research.

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South Africa's Minister of Communications Tells Terra Viva Her Country Will Not Wait for the Global Community to Take Action on ICTs

It was announced this week that a year-long study will be conducted into Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's proposal for a digital fund to help developing nations bridge the ICT divide. Do you think such a fund is critically important?

I'm not going to wait in South Africa for somebody to come and give us money — we just have to make do with whatever we have. But, it's not an answer that everybody can give. It's a very different answer from somebody who would come from Mali.

Many of these countries (developing states) are countries, as one of the ministers said, whose monies have been taken, and are kept in European or American banks. And therefore, when people are emotional about that, it's because there is a good cause. I think different countries need different kinds and levels of assistance.

Let's talk about NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development). The initiative has put a priority on getting the infrastructure in place that is needed to give Africans access to ICTs. Has all this talk resulted in any projects?

We have asked our own South African company to see what it can do with other countries in terms of electricity roll-out. We have asked for a study to see the viability of the Congo River and its hydro-electric capacity, because we recognise that that is going to be an important part of infrastructure roll-out. Because, you can have all the communications infrastructure

you want, but it won't really work unless you also have the energy.

We have already talked about an under-sea cable on the east coast, and people have been working together — both governments and business — in terms of the extension of the cable. You just have to say: what is it that you can do, working together as business — as governments — to bring these things together? And, international financiers or whoever wants the business, will participate where they see interest for themselves.

A lot has been said at this conference about languages that are used on the Internet, and the fact that some do not have a presence on the web. South Africa is funding a portal where all of the country's eleven official languages can be read (sedibafountain.org.za). How did this come about?

It's actually an initiative by young people at the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa, NEMISA. One of the difficulties with access is that it's not just having a physical point to connect to. It is also the language of access, the content. You can go to a place, but if everything is in English — does it help you? So, a South African would find their language on the site. They would find content that is relevant for them, and their own life experience.

And for us as government, if we are to deliver services, then this site is going to be important too, so that people would know what services government offers, to whom and where. People were quite amazed at the number of hits on the site.

Looking at the other issues raised by WSIS — which do you feel are the most important?

Well, issues around security of information and the networks. The issues around ICANN, I think, were very important for us.

What are your views on the debate around ICANN's continued management of domain names?

At the moment, the Internet is governed by laws specific to one country (even) one state, in one particular country. And, it doesn't really allow for participation of other people. Like all things which start in a particular place, it is shaped by a particular culture.

I think what people are saying is that the way the Internet is governed should not be subject to the law of one state. Because should there be conflict, a developing country like Bangladesh would have to sue in the courts of the United States. I mean, really! Give us a break.



Summit delegates gather in Palexpo: if the New Partnership for Africa's Development succeeds, this scene will also become a reality throughout Africa.

Community Media Constrained

Terra Viva spoke with Steve Buckley, president of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)

“Generally we're still very dissatisfied and frustrated with the situation” at the WSIS, Buckley said.

“What we've had is a process that started off with a rather poor initial framework, which was a mixture of the outcome of the G8 Dotforce agreement and a rather technocratic view of ICT that's been predominantly about the Internet.”

“Then that's been overlaid by a great deal of political controversy about a small number of issues ... despite the fact that the whole summit is predicated on a UN recommendation that looks at acknowledging technology as a way of furthering the millennium development goals.”

Those goals include to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger and to achieve universal primary school education, both by 2015.

“Where freedom of expression is referred to (in drafts of the official WSIS documents) it's often with a corollary about ensuring that it's in conformity with national laws, which is really quite extraordinary in a UN document to see that sort of thing. We know that in many countries national laws themselves do not conform well with human rights.”

Community broadcasters have been particularly targeted, by the business interests that control private commercial media operations, added Buckley. Leading that charge has been El Salvador.

“Whenever the words ‘community media’ have been mentioned, the Salvadoran delegation has systematically opposed it and ensured that it's been suppressed ... The main leaders of (El Salvador's) private broadcasting organisations are very very close to the current ruling party.”

According to Buckley, El Salvador's leading television broadcaster has about a 90 percent share of the TV audience, while one commercial group owns 38 of about 150 radio stations. Globally, there are roughly 10,000 community broadcasters but Buckley says community media's potential is still underdeveloped.

“A quarter of the world's population in China have no real community broadcasting”, while in India, “community broadcasting is just starting to take off this year”.

What distinguishes community media, says the AMARC president, is accessibility. “It's not just a matter of carrying local information but they are accessible for people to take part in and be part of making the media ... that's a key distinguishing feature compared to most public and commercial broadcasters”.

Buckley sees one bright light in Venezuela's recent changes to laws on community media.

“There's recognition within the licensing framework now and there's also proposals from the government to establish a fund to assist community broadcasting.”

“Both of those are things that we very much welcome but clearly licensing mechanisms can also become controlling mechanisms and finance can also bring problems of political leverage, so we have to be careful about the potential impact of that. But on balance I think that the developments in Venezuela are probably very good.”

“It's not very surprising that Venezuela is quite enthusiastic about community media because community broadcasters are serving well some of their core voters and are certainly providing a more balanced coverage of the government than they currently get from the large private broadcaster,” he added.

World Summits and Global Governance

Understanding Non-State Actors

The WSIS preparatory process has provided some exceptional examples with regard to the development of new structures for interaction and for communication between global inter-governmental institutions on the one hand and non-state actors on the other. It allowed for further development and for new forms of participation, for providing contributions to the definition of the issues of the information society and for partnerships in recognizing the shared common objectives and the way forward. WSIS has made history in the evolving structures and procedures of Global Governance.

This offers an opportunity to review somewhat more analytically some of the concepts used and the implications for the different roles to be allocated to non-state actors. Who are they? What is their legitimacy for being invited into governance processes? What really is “global gover-

Global Governance refers to the mutual relationship and horizontal interaction between the United Nations and other intergovernmental organisations on the one hand and civil society organisations, the different institutions of knowledge production, the business community, the media, local and regional authorities, and parliamentarians on the other.

nance”? Who is civil society? Can the private sector be civil society? Are NGO’s “stakeholders”? Do all “non-state actors” pursue the same objectives and make similar contributions to the governance process? Let me try some clarifications.

Global Governance refers to the mutual relationship and horizontal interaction between the United Nations and other intergovernmental organisations on the one hand and civil society organisations, the different institutions of knowledge production, the business community, the media, local and regional authorities, and parliamentarians on the other. These interactions relate to the processes of international decision-making which aim at defining common global objectives and norms in the different sectors of our Global Agenda, to institutional developments as well as to the formulation of operational activities.

Over the past three and half decades global governance processes evolved in the context of international conferences and summits, in the assemblies of specialized agencies of the UN system, within the EOCOSOC system of organs, including for example in the Commission on Human Rights, but also, in a more recent development, with regard to special

events of the UN General Assembly and under special procedures with regard to agenda items of the Security Council. On the whole it can be said that innovative formulas of consultation and the presentation of views have moved international negotiating processes from intergovernmental diplomacy to becoming increasingly global political processes with decision-making exposed to concrete inputs from non-governmental and non-state actors and stake-holders.

It is important to recognize that the key partners in “global governance” base their interaction with the decision-making processes on different types of legitimacy, pursue different interests and perform different functions which should have implications with regard to a differentiated approach in the institutional set-up facilitating their involvement.

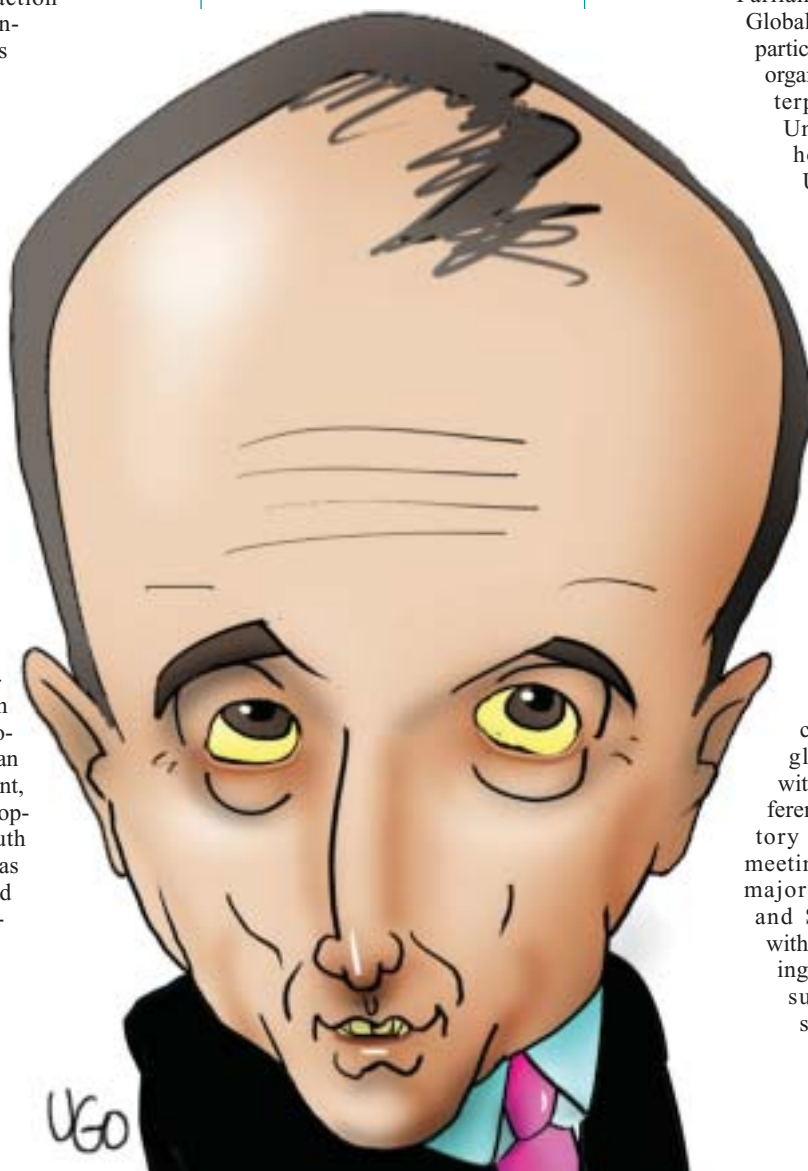
Civil Society has become an indispensable partner in managing global affairs. In fact much of our current global agenda – human rights, environment, sustainable development, North-South solidarity etc. – has been defined thanks to the articulations and political transactions at local, national and global levels by civil society. How then can we define civil society? Civil society is the citizen in public space. “Public space” is that abstract area where the common good of society is articulated and transacted, be it by a single or by a group of citizens (non-governmental organisation). The legitimacy of civil society’s role in governance processes is derived exclusively from its affirmation of the encompassing interests and goals of the entire community respectively by operational contributions in public space (e.g. the Red Cross and Red Crescents). Civil society is therefore not to be considered a “stake-holder” keeping in mind that it does not pursue particular vested interests but sees its role exclusively in affirming the common good.

Academia’s participation in global governance has become increasingly indispensable as the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of our international problems have surpassed the capacity of traditional diplomacy. Understanding the global agenda is not any more possible without the support and contributions by scientists and by the institutions of “knowledge production” (universities, research institutions, think tanks etc.). Increasingly, science and research not only offer answers to the challenges of the global political agenda but have become an important element in enlightened global policy- and decision-making.

Trade Unions, similar to the private sector and other interest-related “stake-holders”, pursue the specific interests of the employed which have their place also in global public space. In fact the International Labour Organisation deals concretely with their concerns. In the very developed par-

The Vienna 1991 ASCEND Confer-

ence in preparation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992) was the first organized scientific contribution to a UN conference. The Role of Science in the Information Society (RSIS) conference allows the academic community and scientific institutions and organisations to remind the World Summit on the Information Society of the indispensable contribution science has made and will make to the advancement of the information and knowledge in our societies.



Derived from their democratic mandate. Except for the case of the NGO

“Parliamentarians for Global Action” they are not to be considered civil society.

Parliamentarians can make a most important contribution through bridging the gap often existing between the global agenda and local national political processes and decisions dealt with in national parliaments.

Local and Regional Authorities have rightly been named by the UN Secretary General as partners in coping with our Global Agenda. In fact, it has been repeatedly stressed that practically all global issues have to be addressed in our local communities and regions: economic development, social issues like poverty, health, housing, education, employment; the environmental challenges are closely related to urbanisation, urban resource use and waste disposal; drugs and crime, human security and societal development are to be confronted primarily on a local and regional level.

It has been most laudable that also the World Summit on the Information Society held a contributory Summit event for cities and regions at Lyon, France, thus reminding the

participatory decision-making processes and structure of the ILO trade unions are not to be considered civil society.

However, as in the case of the private sector, when addressing general public interests also trade unions should be recognized as acting as a part of civil society.

Parliamentarians’ role in global governance is still largely unclear. While certain regional organisations have succeeded in establishing parliamentary organs with a varying spectrum of decision-making powers, such as the African Union, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, parliamentarians have been able to approach the framework of Global Governance only as members of national delegations, as members of a non-governmental organisation – Parliamentarians for Global Action – or as participants in events organised by the Interparliamentary Union. In 2002, however, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the IPU as “interstate organisation” and granted it the status of observer.

In the past the IPU has received broad recognition for contributing to the discourse on global issues with regional conferences, contributory and lateral meetings related to major conferences and Summits and with meetings dealing with specific substantive issues

The legitimacy of parliamentarians, different from civil society, is

derived from their democratic mandate. Except for the case of the NGO

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Summit participants of the important contribution to be made at the local level.

The legitimacy of the participation of local and regional authorities in global governance is based on their constitutionally defined tasks and responsibilities. However, local and regional authorities have a different basis of (democratic and constitutionally defined) legitimacy for their involvement in global governance. They certainly must not be under the concept of civil society.

The Creative Sector, representing the persons and institutions in the arts and culture, plays an important role in transacting key values from our global agenda into the awareness and conscience of citizens and of decision-makers. Their invitation to and participation in global governance is usually a supportive one, less structured or institutionalised, yet generally fundamental in shaping a societal capacity in dealing with the different dimension of our globality.

The Media, are an increasingly important element in the evolving global political processes described by the term global governance. Their important structural task consists in transporting the inputs provided by civil society, academia, by “stakeholders” like the private sector, labour and other special interest organisations, by parliamentarians and by local and regional authorities into the intergovernmental processes of decision-making and, of course, into the national governmental positions developed in this regard. It is to be considered crucial for the evolution of a global inter-sectorial and inter-institutional discourse on different issues that the media give appropriate space to the emerging global challenges and to the positions taken by the various partners and interest groups.

In this sense the media contribute to making the type of communication and information possible, which is at the core of global governance.

In this sense, the media are also not to be subsumed under the terms “civil society” or “stake-holders”. In turn they should be recognized for their very specific and indispensable contribution in the field of communication.

Global governance is thus to be seen as complex process of interaction between state-, inter-state and non-state actors with different roles and contributions to the formulation of policies and to their implementation. As the evolution of governance practices has and even more so will have important institutional implications a differentiated understanding of the various actors is of fundamental importance. Academia is to be directly related to the decision-makers being entrusted by them with research on issues and on policy options. Civil society is to contribute to the articulation of goals and objectives and to a better understanding of the common good. The private sector is to articulate its concrete interests and how they may be affected by alternative courses of action. Parliamentarians have to carry their awareness of the interdependence between local and global affairs into national policy- and rule-making. Local authorities transact the global agenda locally, receiving an understanding of the broader ramifications of their local problematique while at the same time conveying their agenda to the global governance process. The media ultimately make global governance function. There is a growing need to address media capacities in relation to the affairs and processes at the global level

Walther Lichem

Ben Ali, ouvre ton pays!

Carole Vann

Une centaine de Tunisiens ont protesté hier à Genève contre la venue de leur président. Ils réclament la libéralisation des 500 prisonniers d'opinion et en priorité celle de deux journalistes. Opposants démocrates et islamistes peuvent-ils faire bon ménage ?

“ C'est une honte : notre président garde des journalistes en prison alors qu'il arrive à Genève pour le SMSI ”. Mehdi Ben Hamida protestait hier avec une centaine d'opposants tunisiens au centre de Genève. Calmement, ils scandaient: “ Libérez les prisonniers d'opinion, nous voulons l'amnistie générale ”. Deux journalistes figuraient sur les pancartes : Abdallah Zoueri (libéré en juin 2002 après 11 ans de détention, il vient d'être arrêté à nouveau) et Hamadi Jbali (en prison depuis 13 ans).

En Tunisie, près de 99% des prisonniers politiques sont de la mouvance islamiste. La plupart des réfugiés tunisiens en Occident le sont aussi. La majorité des manifestants d'hier l'étaient certainement : les femmes étaient presque toutes voilées. “ Lorsqu'un démocrate chez nous est persécuté ou emprisonné, le monde entier se mobilise. Pour les islamistes, personne ne bouge ”, explique Omar Mestiri, directeur du magazine en ligne Kalima - bloqué - et secrétaire général du Conseil national des libertés en Tunisie (CNLT - parti démocrate non reconnu). Résultat : les Tunisiens de mouvance islamiste, souvent gravement torturés et maltraités chez eux, demandent asile - et l'obtiennent pour des raisons humanitaires évidentes - au Nord de la Méditerranée.

SMSI à Tunis : “ Oui, mais pas à n'importe quel prix ”

Omar Mestiri est venu au SMSI avec Oum Ziad - rédactrice en chef de Kalima - dénoncer les nombreuses atteintes aux libertés dans son pays. “ Nous rejoignons les islamistes sur les revendications minimales, soutient-il. Nous demandons la libération de tous les prisonniers d'opinion au nom des principes des droits de l'homme. Je ne défends pas le principe d'annulation du Sommet à Tunis. Mais nous ne pouvons l'offrir à Ben Ali à n'importe quel prix. Nous demandons aussi le libre accès à internet, le pluralisme de la presse, la fin des fraudes électorales massives et de vrais débats au sein de l'espace public. ”

Jusqu'où les démocrates sont-ils prêts à jouer le jeu démocratique avec les islamistes ? “ Cette question est une fausse problématique, rétorque-t-il. S'il y avait des élections honnêtes en Tunisie, il n'y aurait pas plus de 30% d'islamistes élus. Notre situation est très différente de l'Algérie. Nous disposons d'une large classe moyenne, avec une forte promotion féminine. Notre pays a la chance de ne pas avoir de pétrole, ce qui favorise les petites entreprises. Autre qualité : les Tunisiens sont fondamentalement non violents. Nos islamistes sont parmi les plus modérés du monde arabe. Je suis prêt à parier sur leur capacité d'évolution à la manière turque. ”

Omar Mestiri et Oum Ziad font partie de la frange de démocrates qui prônent le dialogue avec les islamistes. “ Les mesures éradicatrices adoptées contre eux par le pouvoir ont fait sombrer la démocratie dans un système répressif”, soutient Mestiri. Oum Ziad ajoute : “ La dérive autoritaire n'a pas commencé en 1991 avec les islamistes, comme veut le faire croire le régime. Elle a commencé dès les premières semaines après l'arrivée de Ben Ali au pouvoir (voir encadré). Les autorités font intentionnellement l'amalgame entre droits de l'homme et terrorisme. Et nous craignons que l'Occident ne tombe dans ce piège. Personnellement, je suis contre le voile. Mais je suis encore plus contre ceux qui l'imposent ou l'interdisent. ”



Humberto Saigado

“ Notre président garde des journalistes en prison et vient parler d'information à Genève ”, dénoncent les opposants tunisiens

Oum Ziad censurée par le général Ammar

Oum Ziad vient d'être condamnée à 8 mois de prison avec sursis pour — “ détention de devises illicites ”. Dans les années 1980, elle dirigeait Al Rai (l'opinion), le premier journal suspendu dès l'avènement de Ben Ali en 1987. “ C'est dans Al Rai que nous avons créé les slogans pour un Etat de droit qui ont été récupérés par Ben Ali, raconte-t-elle. A l'époque, la Tunisie et le Liban étaient les seuls pays arabes à avoir une relative liberté de la presse. La Tunisie est aussi le premier pays arabe à avoir constitué une ligue des droits de l'homme en 1977. ”

Ironie de l'histoire, le ministre de l'intérieur à l'époque qui avait pris la décision de suspendre Al Rai n'était autre que le général Habib Ammar - responsable du Comité d'organisation du volet tunisien du Sommet en 2005. C'est aussi lui qui avait interdit l'entrée en Tunisie de l'hebdo Jeune Afrique à cause d'un article jugé inacceptable.

Des signes d'essoufflement ?

La Tunisie adhère à tous les traités internationaux, elle est le bon élève du FMI et de la Banque Mondiale, elle est le premier partenaire de l'Union européenne dans l'accord de 1995. “ Mais derrière ce miracle économique, il y a ces jeunes qui se jettent à la mer tous les jours pour fuir ce “ miracle ” et la terrible inflation. On les retrouve souvent morts dans des embarcations de fortune qui échouent sur les côtes italiennes.

Pour le monde arabe, la Tunisie incarne un nouveau modèle de dictature bien huilée, tout en restant un partenaire fréquentable pour l'Occident (les modèles irakien, libyen ou syrien sont dépassés).

Pourtant, les signes d'essoufflement sont là : “ Ben Ali fait moins de procès politiques, remarque Mestiri. Le coût pour son image est trop élevé. Le dernier était celui de Hama Hamami - mari de Radia Nasraoui il est resté 4 ans en clandestinité - en 2002.

De plus, après la poursuite pour torture à Genève contre l'ancien ministre de l'intérieur Abdallah Kallal et la publication des listes des tortionnaires, la brutalité diminue en Tunisie.

U.S. Signals Solidarity — On Own Terms

Ambassador Announces Support for Investment in South

U.S. Ambassador to the WSIS, David Gross, is keen to play down talk that President George W. Bush's failure to attend the summit means the U.S. administration is sidelining the process.

The size of the U.S. delegation to the WSIS is still substantial, Gross told a media conference Wednesday.

“The fact that the president's chief science and technology advisor, Jack Marburger, someone very senior in the White House, is in attendance here is a reflection of our commitment to this process,” said Gross.

He believes one of the summit's purposes is to draw attention at higher political levels to the importance of the underlying issues.

“And most particularly the importance that new technologies, whether it be the Internet or other mechanisms, are helping

people around the world with regard to their social, economic and political development,” added Gross.

But the U.S. delegation's chief failed to offer a completely resounding vote of confidence for the WSIS process, saying, “time will tell the importance of any event, including this one”.

The ambassador did admit that the conference declaration and action plan are important documents, although he also noted they are not legally binding.

“They are important expressions of political will, and there is a unique opportunity at this summit to check on the adequacy of the follow-up by countries and other organisations because this summit is unique in being held in two phases,” Gross said.

The U.S. delegation made efforts to counter critics within the civil society movement who feel Washington has already ruled out any form of “digital solidarity fund” to finance ICT development projects in southern nations.

In an effort to smooth over the rift that has emerged between North and South over this issue, the delegation proudly announced the creation of a 400-million-dollar support facility, designed to encourage U.S. investment in the telecommunications and IT sectors of developing countries.

But the United States looks once again poised to shun the multilateral approach in favour of one-to-one arrangements.

“We have found that by directly providing support to those people and those countries doing the right thing for their people, that this is the most effective means,” said Gross.

While backing calls for the feasibility study on the need for a digital fund — a task handed to U.N. chief Kofi Annan just prior to the start of the WSIS — the U.S. delegation downplayed its obvious dislike for another global fund.

Gross proclaimed whole-hearted support for WSIS organiser, the International Telecommunications Union, which has also been criticised by civil society groups for being too focused on technical rather than humanitarian issues.

“One example of our multilateral action is that we are extraordinarily active in terms of our financial support and also in terms of our human capacity support for the International Telecommunications Union,” Gross said. “It does a tremendous amount of capacity building in the developing world, in a generally very effective and excellent fashion.”

By Brian Thomson

Seizing the Moment

GATHERING OF MEDIA ACTIVISTS EJECTED FROM SITE

Organisers of the WSIS have claimed they were breaking new ground by inviting all relevant actors to the global summit on the information society. Their “multi-stakeholder approach” to negotiations was to produce a “common vision”.

But some actors have refused to be integrated. “The WSIS is dominated by a repressive security agenda and by neoliberal objectives,” an activist from the Geneva03 network told Terra Viva.

“Civil society participation is only an exercise of legitimising this illegitimate gathering.”

Geneva03 is a network of media activists that began discussing how they could intervene in the week-long

summit nearly one year ago. That resulted in a series of events called WSIS? We Seize!, which focus on themes the activists say have been sidelined within the WSIS process.

“It is not a side event and not a counter-summit,” said another Geneva03 activist. “It is a gathering of those groups and people who have created information society — Linux programmers, grassroots projects experimenting with new technology, people trying out new ways of collaborating.”

WSIS? We Seize! includes three modules — a strategic conference to critically reflect on issues such as intellectual property, “info war”, and communications policy; a Polymedia

Lab that functions as an open space for sharing skills, experimenting in non-hierarchical communication; and a three-day video-stream — High Noon — to link Geneva with the rest of the world.

Even though WSIS? We Seize! was included in the official WSIS programme, its critical approach has caused some problems. On Tuesday morning, Swiss riot police entered the Polymedia Lab in Geneva's city centre close to MAMCO, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.

The police blocked the doors, denied access to arriving participants and visitors, and demanded that those present leave and remove their equipment.

Authorities cited technical and safety reasons for the ejection but “we know that the decision is entirely political”, said a group activist. The network has a verbal agreement with the building's management for the duration of the publicly announced WE Seize! events, which are mentioned in the official WSIS programme.

Despite the interruption, the activities continue. High Noon will start soon to broadcast interventions from around the globe in a continuous flow, with viewers having the option to interact with them.

“It's an experience of streaming over the Internet, using a mix of archives, already collected tapes and

interviews with delegates, and putting them together in a continuous flux to give people a different view of the summit process and themes,” said an activist from Italy.

“We want to encourage people to participate from their place and give them the possibility to interact: even if they couldn't come to Geneva they can be virtually present.”

“Technology is produced by all society and not captured by companies and certain people. We are taking our autonomy now, trying to extend free software as a form to produce culture, and distribute knowledge to all,” said another activist.

By Stefania Milan

A MEYRIN, BERCEAU DU WEB

Touaregs, Dogons, Himbas dans le cyberspace

Comment Tombouctou est devenue la première mairie virtuelle d'Afrique. Qui vient au seul cybercafé du pays Dogon. Comment la toile a permis aux Himbas de Namibie de sauver leur terre. Pionniers du cyber-espace chez eux, ils ont pris pour la première fois l'avion pour retrouver d'autres minorités au Cyberfestival de Meyrin. Et raconter leur histoire sur la toile.

Toumoute Nouhoum, Dogon du Mali

Guide, il alimente un site pour les touristes et tient l'unique cybercafé du plateau Dogon à Bandiagara. "Il y a 4 ordinateurs dont 3 fonctionnent. Les villageois y viennent surtout pour contacter des touristes occidentaux qu'ils ont connus. Ils apportent l'adresse mail, en pensant que nous fonctionnons comme une boîte postale. Nous devons les aider à créer leur propre adresse. Beaucoup de gamins, colporteurs auprès des touristes, viennent aussi. Ils parlent souvent très bien français, anglais, allemand, espagnol, italien. Mais souvent, ils savent à peine lire et écrire. Internet les aide à s'améliorer.

Il existe très peu d'informations en ligne sur les Dogons (10 adresses au maximum). Je suis le seul Dogon qui ait créé un site pour les touristes. On trouve des détails très pratiques: comment venir au Mali, comment se comporter ou se vêtir. Et il y a des questions plus fondamentales: le pillage des objets culturels ou comment réellement aider les villageois. Trop de touristes qui viennent chez nous et voient les enfants avec des habits déchirés, leur font l'aumône, distribuent des bonbons, des médicaments. Très vite, les mauvaises habitudes se créent. La société se désintègre. J'explique qu'il faut respecter la hiérarchie de notre communauté. S'ils veulent aider, qu'ils s'adressent aux chefs des villages.

Les Occidentaux parlent toujours de développement, ils veulent construire des écoles partout. Mais une fois l'école installée, nous sommes confrontés au problème de l'instituteur. Souvent les villages n'ont pas les moyens de le payer. J'explique sur mon site que la principale ressource économique dans le pays Dogon, c'est la culture des oignons. Pour cela il faut de l'eau. Nous avons avant tout besoin de barrages de retenue d'eau. Dans mon village, nous avons monté un projet de barrage de retenue d'eau (12'000 dollars). Il se trouve sur le site."

www.dogono.nouh.free.fr

Ould Najem Shindouk

guide nomade, historien, conteur, commerçant de sel, à Tombouctou.

Premier internaute touareg. "En 1998, l'UNESCO avait envoyé des spécialistes, j'étais leur guide. Ils m'ont convaincu de l'importance d'Internet, de l'ouverture vers l'extérieur. Tombouctou a été la première ville en Afrique occidentale à avoir été connectée. J'ai été le premier internaute touareg, avec une adresse mail. Mais l'UNESCO n'a pas appris aux gens comment utiliser le net, comment accéder aux connaissances.

En plus, je réalise que nous ne sommes pas prêts. Nos priorités sont la santé, l'eau, l'éducation. Internet ne peut pas nous apporter des solutions, ça peut être un élément de la solution, mais pour l'instant, elle ne nous est pas indispensable.

Internet appartient au monde des affaires qui court à 1000 km/h. Dans cette logique, elle rapproche les gens. Vous, vous dépendez du temps. Mais chez nous, c'est le temps qui dépend de nous."

mail: shindouk@yahoo.fr

Cornelius Mukuena Tjuma, traducteur Himba de Namibie

Joëlle Chesselet, réalisatrice d'Afrique du Sud. "Les Himbas (tribus semi nomades: 10'000 personnes) viennent de gagner un combat de 7 ans pour empêcher la construction d'un barrage hydroélectrique qui allait inonder leurs terres et leurs tombes. Grâce aux productions filmées depuis le début et diffusées sur Internet et dans les festivals, nous avons pu mobiliser l'opinion publique.

De ce projet en est né un autre: comment créer des interfaces sur Internet qui puissent être utilisées par des communautés de culture orale. Nous travaillons sur deux niveaux: le contenu et l'outil. Nous cherchons à créer un système d'images et d'icônes accessibles à des personnes qui ne savent ni lire ni écrire: ce projet est mené en commun avec l'université du Cap. Pour le contenu, nous avons dix ans d'archives sur les Himbas, avec notamment les histoires des anciens. Cette communauté, méprisée par le pouvoir central, est menacée de disparition. Notre projet permettrait à cette culture d'avoir un support pour que les jeunes puissent se reconnecter avec les anciens, même en ayant sauté une génération."

web:www.offthefence.com

Alain Modoux

délégué suisse pour le SMSI, initiateur du projet cyberfestival à Meyrin.

"Quand le projet du SMSI a germé, j'avais deux soucis. L'un, né des expériences précédentes (Rio, Pékin), où je me suis rendu compte que dans ces énormes machines destinées aux privilégiés (porteurs de badges), la dimension humaine était souvent impossible. C'est la cas à Palexpo, où se tient le Sommet. La population est coupée de tout cela. Je trouvais qu'il fallait un espace où les gens puissent se voir, se toucher, où ils puissent venir sans passer par l'énorme machine de sécurité."

Autre préoccupation: au début, ce Sommet, organisé par l'UIT, partait sur des questions purement technologiques. Je me disais qu'on allait passer à côté de l'essentiel, d'où le projet du cyberfestival. Cette crainte s'est un peu estompée grâce à la mobilisation extraordinaire de la société civile qui a fait basculer ce sommet en rééquilibrant technologie et contenu.

Il n'y avait pas de lieu mieux rêvé que Meyrin pour accueillir ce projet: plus de 120 nationalités s'y côtoient. Cette commune a toujours montré une volonté politique d'ouverture. Et le CERN (Centre européen de recherches nucléaires s'y trouve): c'est là qu'est né le web.

Carole Vann

Aging Gracefully With ICTs

Digital technology has the potential to be of great assistance to senior citizens. As there will be more over 60s than under 15s by 2050, now could be the time to develop the applications they need.

The thought of being 85 or older and living alone would terrify many people. Yet, modern technology and communication devices can do much to improve the quality of life of someone who finds himself in that situation.

According to Irene Hoskins of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the United Kingdom, 85 percent of the "baby boomers" — the generation born between 1946 and the early seventies — own mobile phones, and 62 percent use the Internet.

By contrast, of those 65 and above, only 37 percent own a cell phone and 13 percent use the Internet.

"There is a digital divide among the generations, even in a highly developed country such as the UK," Hoskins says.

The implication, she adds, is that the baby boomers are better informed — and have access to information and about their rights and entitlements. They also have a greater awareness of health issues, and they use modern technologies to participate in virtual communities.

As the boomers grow older, these technologies may also enable them to remain in their own homes and live independently for longer, rather than take up residence in retirement homes. With ICT's enhancing a person's ability to remain in touch with friends, family and others, the senior citizens of tomorrow also stand a better chance of avoiding feelings of isolation.

"This will save health and social services resources — both financial and human — which can be invested for other purposes," Hoskins says. Although the definition of what it means to be "old" is in itself contentious, the description is normally applied to those who are 60 or older.

Social security has improved in some parts of the world, but many old people still find themselves excluded and ignored. For someone living in Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation can be dire, as they may find themselves the only care-givers for orphaned children whose parents have died of AIDS-related illnesses.

The WHO has now proposed a concept of "active ageing" based on three pillars: health, security and participation. This is in line with an action plan developed at the Second World Assembly on Ageing that was held in Madrid, in April last year.

Hoskins says that if active ageing policies were in place, they would reduce the digital divide between young and old. "Active ageing is good for all of society, not just older people. But, we need to recognize its benefits and invest in it."

Given that the global population is ageing, this idea seems eminently sensible. Worldwide, there are currently around 600 million persons aged 60 and over. This figure will double by 2025, and reach two billion by 2050.

By then the numbers of the elderly will be bigger than the population of children under 15 — and 80 percent of senior citizens will be in the developing world.

The launch of the plan on ageing in 2002 marked a turning point in addressing the challenges faced by a greying world. But, matching commitments towards



HE CAN AFFORD TO WAIT, BUT HIS ELDERS CANNOT.

the aged with funding is likely to be problematic, especially when it comes to ICTs.

Initiatives like "SeniorWatch" — a project funded by the European Union — may help. This aims at developing a better understanding of the "market dynamics of information society technology products and services relevant for older (and older disabled) people."

The initiative has resulted in a Europe-wide survey of some 10,000 citizens aged 50 years and over, a survey of 500 decision-makers in organisations providing home care, and case studies illustrating best practice with regard to ICT applications for older people. The research is also looking at country reports showing the influence of national policy on ICTs for older people.

Information gathered by the sur-

vey is being analysed to see how Europe's policies towards the aged compare with those in Japan and the United States.

Elsewhere, private initiatives have been quick to recognise business opportunities in technology that meets the needs of the aged. Take "Gold Coast Seniors On The Net" for instance, a club which aims to improve "the quality of life for seniors through communication, education and social interaction".

The club's website says the society started with a group of 14 computer enthusiasts six years ago. By the end of 2002, membership had swelled to 1,700 — with hundreds connecting to the internet as they learnt how to use a computer. Their motto: "Seniors Helping Seniors".

By Wilson Johwa

El vaciado de contenido

Gustavo Capdevila

"Para qué queremos tractores sin violines", preguntaba hace medio siglo a sus compatriotas de extracción mayoritaria campesina el fundador de la Costa Rica moderna, el tres veces presidente José Figueres (1948-1949, 1954-1958 y 1970-1974).

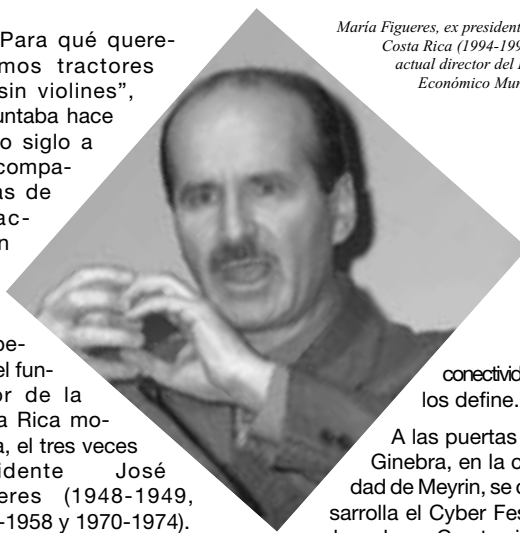
La metáfora de don "Pepe" Figueres resume la rivalidad entre ciencia y cultura que reaparece en el actual debate de la CMSI como el potencial antagonismo entre la tecnología de la información y los contenidos locales propios de cada comunidad.

En realidad, todo el debate que precedió esta Cumbre estuvo impregnado de esa dicotomía entre la pura tecnología y los valores, reivindicados por la sociedad civil principalmente.

Y ahora, un hijo de don "Pepe", José María Figueres, también ex presidente de Costa Rica (1994-1998) y actual director del Foro Económico Mundial, participa de manera activa en esa polémica.

Figueres hijo considera los contenidos locales una forma de fortalecer el desarrollo de los pueblos. Los define como un ejercicio democrático con

Maria Figueres, ex presidente de Costa Rica (1994-1998) y actual director del Foro Económico Mundial



conectividad, los define.

A las puertas de Ginebra, en la ciudad de Meyrin, se desarrolla el Cyber Festival sobre Contenido

Local, donde Figueres explicó un proyecto de comunidades inteligentes interconectadas que estableció la Fundación de Costa Rica para el Desarrollo Sostenible.

Esa es una de las formas para alentar en las comunidades la creación de textos, imágenes y programas, lo que equivale al contenido. Así dejarán de ser consumidores de textos mundializados traídos de otras partes, estimó Alain Modoux, un ex subdirector general de la Unesco responsable ahora de la organización del CyberFestival de Meyrin.

Las creaciones responderán a las necesidades educativas, sociales, económicas y culturales de sus comunidades, villas, poblados, étnias y minorías. Lo más importante es que se difundirán en sus propios idiomas.

La cuestión del idioma es crucial en el tema del conte-

nido de las TIC. Cuando se habla del papel del contenido local en la sociedad de la información, lo más importante es preservar la diversidad lingüística que refleja la identidad de ese pueblo y de esa comunidad, expuso Adama Samassekou, presidente de la conferencia preparatoria de la Cumbre.

Samassekou, ex ministro de Educación de Mali y actual presidente de la Academia Africana de Lenguas, advierte de que nos encaminamos hacia una suerte de monolingüismo, inclusive en la ONU, donde imperan seis idiomas: árabe, chino, español, francés, inglés y ruso.

Otro organismo multilateral, la Corte Internacional de Justicia de La Haya, reconoce sólo al inglés y al francés. Los demás idiomas corren peligro de ser relegados a un plano nacional. Ese es uno de los elementos del problema de la diversidad cultural y lingüística.

El idioma contribuye al intercambio y a la participación con otras culturas. Pero no se puede compartir lo que no se posee. Y por otra parte, la desaparición de las lenguas constituye una tragedia para la entera humanidad, razonó Samassekou.

Una de las razones de la no participación de los pueblos en los procesos de de-

sarrollo es la utilización de idiomas que no les resultan familiares y también el desconocimiento de lenguas extranjeras, como inglés, francés y otros, impuestos por la dominación colonial.

Pero África representa un caso muy especial. En la mayor parte del continente, el niño que va a la escuela por primera vez, comienza las lecciones con un idioma diferente al que se habla en su familia.

La cuestión no reside en saber si se deben sacrificar una u otra lengua en beneficio de dos, tres o aún de una decena. Lo importante es favorecer la intercomunicación continental por medio de idiomas de gran difusión, denominadas lenguas transfronterizas vehiculares.

En la relación de las tecnologías de la información con el contenido, el mundo debe guiarse por la ideología de la solidaridad en lugar de la ideología de la competencia, propuso el lingüista africano.



Adama Samassekou, ex ministro de Educación de Mali y actual presidente de la Academia Africana de Lenguas.

PAKISTAN:

Students Get Real Lessons from Virtual University

ISLAMABAD (IPS)

Ali Haider is into the third semester of a bachelor of computer science degree course and is enthusiastic about his subject. The 22-year-old however wishes his teachers would answer the questions he has a little sooner - it is usually a day before he gets a reply.

That is because Haider's 'campus' is his computer monitor, and his link to his teachers and classmates is electronic. He is one of the 2,200 students enrolled with the

"A student pays about a tenth of conventional tuition fees," explained Malik, "which allows poor but talented people to take advantage of the programme." A four-year degree programme at VU - the first such offered by a government-run university - costs students 68,000 rupees (about 1,178 U.S. dollars).

At the end of those four years and provided they have the grades, Pakistani students then have the option of enrolling in master's degree courses in universities abroad. This is proving to be attractive to bright young Pakistanis.

With the exception of medical and engineering universities, all other universities and colleges in the country offer two-year bachelor's degree programmes that are not recognised by western universities.

But graduates from these institutions do

subjects in view of the growing need for qualified IT professionals.

Now there is a range of subjects to choose from. On offer are four-year degree programmes in business administration, public administration, accounting, finance, commerce, economics, education, law, mass communications, political science, sociology and statistics.

VU planners are buoyed by one vital statistic - the dropout rate which Shafaat Bokhari, administrative head of the university, said is less than 30 percent. "The ratio is 35 to 40 percent in other institutes," he told IPS.

They are also looking forward to the availability of two educational channels on Pakistan television, which are scheduled to begin around end-October, as Dr Attaur Rehman, minister of science and technology, has promised. That will allow distance learning programmes to be broadcast, which is precisely what the VU wants to be able to do.

Using communications technologies as the backbone of an educational programme that is just over a year old has not been plain sailing.

"In the first semester we faced a little difficulty because we were used to interactive study settings in which teachers were there to answer our questions and solve our problems," said Zubair Ahmad, who responded on behalf of his class at Etech College, a VU Virtual Campus in the city of Gujrat in the province of Punjab.

Ahmed said he posts his questions to a moderated online discussion board, from where his teachers pick it up and answer. "Other than that," said Ahmed, "our experience with the university is very good and the system is working very well."

The reliance on the Internet and telecom networks has however thrown up glitches at awkward moments.

Some students have had problems answering examination papers online. "Data loss seems to be a problem," complained Imtiaz Ali Shah, a computer science student based in Islamabad. "We save an answer but the data field turns out to be blank and we lose marks."

Officials at VU acknowledge the problems and say they are working on improving the system. While they tackle temperamental exam papers that are on-line, the university management hopes its new courses will boost the number of enrolled students to 5,000.

"We hope to achieve the target, but we also understand that there needs to be more awareness among people about the virtual studying environment," Bokhari pointed out. "We are using the press and admission advertisements to attract more students."

The most valuable promotion for Pakistan's Virtual University however comes from its students. Despite the difficulties, they have little but praise for it. "It is a very exciting experience," enthused Shahid Aziz, a computer science student. "I find we have a better educational experience here than in most conventional institutions."

Muddasir Rizvi

TOKYO (IPS)

At the rate its membership is growing, the Grannies Computer Association has had to restrict the entry of new applicants, all of whom are eager to enter the world of the Internet.

Since its launch in 1997, some 200 people, all above the age of 60 years, have joined the Tokyo-based citizens' group in a country that is among the fastest ageing societies in the world. People over 65 years now comprise 18.5 percent of Japan's 127 million people.

Kayoko Ookawa, the 74-year-old founder of the group who is a retired stenographer, says: "Judging by the enthusiasm among our members, the elderly are determined to learn more about information technology. All they need are lessons that

whose population accesses the Internet.

The white paper points out that Japan also lags behind the United States in the use of information technology at companies, firms and among the general population.

A basic attitude that must be changed in Japan, notes the paper, is the view of information technology as a means of "improving efficiency, while their American counterparts use the Internet as a 'source of growth'".

A new 'e-Japan' strategy outlined by the government calls for increasing the number of IT users by 2005 and focusing on increasing high-speed Internet connections to 10 million households in that time frame.

A budget of close to 9 billion U.S. dollars has been set

Ookawa says the secret to successful programmes is using technology to target the needs of the elderly - including social relationships in a changing society. "By communicating on the Internet, old people do not feel lonely. The Internet is thus a lifeline, as important as water and electricity," she says.

Members spend several hours chatting, exchanging information and giving advice to each other, a virtual form of communication reminiscent of traditional Japan.

"Old people in Japan feel isolated because society has changed so much. Through the Internet, however, they can share traditions with their own generation. This makes them happier and more energetic as a result," Ookawa explains.

JAPAN / TECHNOLOGY

Digital Grannies

cater to their specific needs."

Members of the Grannies Computer Association get hands-on lessons from information technology experts, all of whom are volunteers.

These experts help the members, most of them are in their eighties and nineties, buy their first personal computers. In succeeding sessions, they explain the intricacies of the World Wide Web to members of a generation that has barely used word processors.

"It is rewarding to see the lives of old people change when they start using the computer," says Saburo Asai, a 60-year-old volunteer. "The going is slow but there is no doubt access to the Internet has contributed to the betterment of their old age."

The Grannies Computer Association and reaching out to the elderly is just one of many projects that are part of the country's goal of becoming a world leader in a "Japan-inspired information technology society", because it lags behind other industrialised countries in information technology.

In its 2003 white paper on information and communications, the government states that Japan is shifting from a "catch-up phase" to a leader and consistent efforts must be made to keep up with the IT revolution.

Official data shows Japan has currently 6.9 million IT users or 54 percent of its IT compatible population. That puts it behind South Korea, which has a penetration rate of 56.2 percent.

At the top of the list globally is Iceland, 69 percent of

aside for this national vision in the next three years.

The senior sector, where only 16.2 percent are computer literate, has also become a key component of the country's IT aspirations.

"Japan is a latecomer in the communications industry but has made enormous progress in catching up. Everything is being done to see nobody is left out," says Minoru Kamaoka, at the IT section at the prime minister's office.

But despite the popularity of groups like the Grannies Computer Association, experts say that other programmes do not always meet seniors' needs.

For example, the labour ministry-sponsored IT programmes for seniors, launched to enhance office operations and make greater use of optical fibre networks in the country, are having mixed results.

Minoru Kamoka, director of the National Silver Human Resources Centre Association, says progress is slow mostly because the elderly have difficulties in keeping up with fast-paced changes in digital technology that are tailored toward office work.

"Government programmes focus heavily on linking computer literacy with jobs, a system that often inhibits older people who, despite learning, cannot compete with more computer-savvy younger generation," he explains.



Indeed, members report, the first thing the elderly members of the Grannies Computer Association do every morning is check the mailing list they are part of.

Before they go to bed at night, they follow the same ritual. "I am on the computer from 5 am to make sure those messages reach members because I know they are all waiting eagerly," says Ookawa.

Asai adds that teaching the elderly to use the Internet for communication also helps them to be more independent. "The Japanese tradition of depending on one's children in old age is fast fading away and the Internet provides them with a tool to be more (independent) that way," he says.

Suwendrini Kakuchi

WSIS DAILY CALENDAR

Thursday, December 11, 2003

1	World Electronic Media Forum (WEMF): Public Service Broadcasting; Global Media, Nonviolent Power and Democratic Change	Palexpo Room P, B	09.00 – 12.30/13.00
2	Bridging the Rural Digital Divide	Palexpo Hall 2 Room Q	15.30 – 16.30
3	The Promise of E-democracy	Palexpo Room Cervin	09.30 – 12.30
4	Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society	Palexpo Room Jura	09.30 – 16.30
5	ICT4D Forum – Bolivia; The Digital Divide; ICT for Poverty Reduction	Palexpo Hall 4 (ICT4D Platform) Rooms 4, 12A, 2 and 3	10.00 – 11.30 11.30 – 14.30 14.00 – 15.30
6	Gender and ICT	Palexpo Room T	13.30 – 16.30
7	World Forum on Communication Rights	Palexpo Room Mont-Blanc	09.30 – 20.00
8	Freedom in E-culture-Experiences & models	Palexpo Room Salève	Round table: 10- 12.00 Conference 1+2: 13.30 – 16.30
9	Perspectives on the Internet media and south youth dialogue	Palexpo Room T	09.30 – 12.30
10	The future of work and quality in the information society	Palexpo Room O	09.30 – 12.30
11	Forum des Droits sur l'Internet	Palexpo Hall 4 (ICT4D Platform) Room 5	16.30

L'éducation au service de la technologie: point de vue de l'UNICEF

L'UNICEF, sous l'égide de Carol Bellamy, Directeur exécutif, lance son rapport principal dans la presse internationale au sommet mondial sur la société de l'information. Ce rapport mettra en exergue le fait que, malgré les énormes avancées de la technologie, l'illettrisme et le manque d'éducation sont la pierre d'achoppement des nations en voie de développement. Sans un rapide progrès qui permette l'accès des garçons et des filles à l'école (plus de 120 millions d'enfants ne peuvent avoir accès à l'enseignement primaire, la majorité étant des filles), le calendrier du développement en son entier sera compromis, y compris les efforts pour réduire la pauvreté, stopper le SIDA et réduire les clivages internationaux. Le rapport démontre que, pour dominer parfaitement la technologie, le monde doit d'abord maîtriser l'éducation de base. Jeudi 13h-14h, Salle de conférence de presse principale, Halle 2.

Indigenous People and Info Society

The Aboriginal Canada Working group, a joint initiative between the Government of Canada and several national Canadian indigenous organisations, present their Aboriginal Canada Portal and discusses the social use of ICT. Palexpo, room Jura, 9.30-16.30.

La solidarité numérique vue par Tunis

Organisée par la société civile agréée par le pouvoir tunisien, une conférence permettra de se faire une idée sur les points de vues officiels ou officieux concernant la société de l'information. Autour du thème de la "solidarité internationale numérique", des "ONG" tunisiennes parleront de droits de la femme, du développement durable, de la société civile. Menu alléchant, au moment où les mouvements des droits de l'homme dénoncent le contrôle absolu du régime tunisien sur les médias et Internet. Palexpo, Halle 2, Salle S, 13h30-16h30.

INFOS CULTURELLES

LES MUSEES DE GENEVE

Entrée gratuite sur présentation du badge SMSI / WSIS du 8 au 12 décembre:

MUSEE d'ART et d'HISTOIRE
Archéologie, beaux-arts et arts appliqués / ouverture 10h-17h.

Exposition temporaire "Mode, passion et collection. Le regard d'une femme"

CABINET des ESTAMPES
ouverture 10h.12h /14h-18h
Exposition temporaire Barry Le Va (artiste américain).

MUSEE d'HISTOIRE des SCIENCES ouverture 10h-17h / Collection d'instruments scientifiques.

MUSEE RATH ouverture 10h-17h Exposition temporaire "Ferdinand Hodler. Le paysage".

MAISON TAVEL Musée d'histoire urbaine et de vie quotidienne genevoise/ ouverture 10h-17h

Exposition temporaire "Quartiers de mémoire: au travail"

MUSEE de l'ARIANA
Musée suisse de la céramique et du verre / ouverture 10h-17h. Exposition temporaire: Petra Weiss (céramiste suisse) Histoires de formes et de couleurs, 1967-2003.

MUSEE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE
Horaires 10h-17h, fermé le lundi. 2 rue Charles-Galland 1203 Genève

bus 5& 3 arrêt Athénée
http://mah.ville-geneve.ch / tel 00 41/ 022 418 26 00

CONCOURS MONDIAL de BANDES DESSINÉES

"La SOCIÉTÉ de l'INFORMATION, C'EST QUOI?"

Palexpo, Halle 4, Centre de Presse

Organisation: Pastel World Association

Infos: frederique.bonet@itu.int

THEÂTRE

"N'Doye, Antigone d'Afrique"

D'après Sophocle, mise en scène de Gilles Laubert

avec la troupe du Théâtre National Daniel Sorano de Dakar

Théâtre Saint-Gervais à 20h30, jeudi et dimanche à 19h / tarif CHF 24.-

Réservation 022 908 20 20

5 rue du Temple, 1201 Genève

bus 3, 4, 5, 10 arrêt Coutance

TerraViva reported on Tuesday that The African Village was organised by APC Africa Rights. That was wrong. It was organised by a Partnership of Southern African Media Organisations, Including APC.

Connecting people for a better life!



ICT for Development Platform

ICT4D Forum Programme highlights for 11 December 2003

10:00 - 18:00, Hall 4, throughout the ICT for Development Platform

Improving lives - reducing poverty - empowering people: Today is GKP Day!

A series of major panel discussions organised by Global Knowledge Partnership, including Multi-stakeholder Partnerships: Meeting the challenge of the Millennium Development Goals; ICT for Poverty Reduction: Myths, realities and development implications; Innovative Financing Mechanisms for ICT4D: Venturing beyond the "forever pilot" syndrome (For details visit www.globalknowledge.org).

Further Highlights

14:00 – 15:30

Smart solutions: overcoming the barriers to equitable access

Simply increasing the number of computers, Internet connections or telephone lines falls far short of solving the problem of equitable access! Grassroots practitioners and entrepreneurs from the South discuss with industry leaders and telecommunications experts the key elements and success factors of a comprehensive access strategy. Among the panelists: Veli Sundbäck, Executive Vice President of Nokia, and Hamadoun Touré, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of ITU. **Where: Hall 4, Conference Room 1**

16:30 – 18:00

Media in post-conflict societies: coping with "the clash of cultures"

Are the media part of the problem or part of the solution? Top media representatives debate the role of media and communication technologies in the reconstruction of traumatised communities. On the panel: Faisal Al-Kasim, Al-Jazeera TV, Luis Baron, author of the book "Internet and War", Shashi Tharoor, UN Undersecretary General for Communications and Public Information, and Joseph K. Ingram, Special Representative to the UN and the WTO and former Director of the World Bank Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Where: Hall 4, Conference Room 1**

10:00 – 11:30

Meeting the challenge of the millennium development goals

Are Multi-stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) the key to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? Jose Maria Figueres-Olson, Chair, UN ICT Task Force and Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, Mohamed Sharil Tamizi, Chair Government Advisory Committee, ICANN, Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives, Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin, Board Member, ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations, examine how ICT can contribute to making the Millennium Goals work. **Where: Hall 4, Conference Room 1**

For the complete ICT4D Forum programme visit our website www.ict-4d.org



The ICT for Development Platform is co-organised by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP). It showcases the development dimension of ICT and aims to enrich the political core segment of the UN World Summit on the Information Society.

“Point Counterpoint”

Kerry McNamara,
author of *ICT, Poverty and Development: Learning from Experience.*

Viola Krebs,
director of International Conference Volunteers.

Is this summit unambitious or unaffordable?

“Well, I think the ambitions of the summit are substantial, whether they are realizable or not I'm not sure. Part of the problem is that a lot of the rhetoric around the summit is focusing on creating pots of money to bridge the digital divide, rather than find realistic solutions for attracting public and private investment to ICTs in a way that will be attainable.”

“Any divide of this scale will only be bridged through real-world win-win partnerships between various actors. The ambitious goals of the WSIS need to now be translated into realistic and applicable solutions.”

Is WSIS a technocrats dream and a humanitarians nightmare?

“No, I wouldn't say that, I'd say that WSIS can be a very powerful tool for getting the message across that ICTs have an enormous humanitarian impact but only if we really focus on the humanitarian problems and not on supposed gaps in technology.”

“Well I'd first want to ask what the purpose of that global fund was, and I'm not yet certain that a global fund of that sort is the best way to address this issue.”

Do we need a digital fund to fight the digital divide?

“If a solidarity fund, it should be based on voluntary contributions and administered in such a way that it can truly finance development projects. Volunteer effort constitutes 14 percent of the global economy. As such, it should also be recognized as a significant contribution to the reduction of the digital divide.”

“I don't think so. Many of the projects shown at ICT4D show real-world applications of technology. For example, the first “virtual city hall” of Mali is providing more visibility and a true opening for a region, such as Timbuktu, which is traditionally very isolated.”



Computer graveyard: Finding ways to recycle equipment is as important as getting it to people in the first place.

L to N

Glossary for Navigating the WSIS

LIR: Local Internet Registries. A Local Internet Registry is generally an Internet Service Provider and can assign space to its own network infrastructure and to users of its network services.

NIR: National Internet Registry. A NIR allocates address space to its members which are generally LIRs.

NSI: Network Solutions, Inc. NSI, pursuant to a cooperative agreement with the U.S. government, was the company that acted as the unique registry and registrar for the .com, .net, and .org top-level domains from 1993-1999. NSI has been acquired by VeriSign, Inc., which currently operates the .com, .net, and .org top-level domain registries under agreements with ICANN and the U.S. government. www.networksolutions.com

NSF: National Science Foundation, an independent U.S. government agency that promotes progress in science and secures the national defense. NSF supports scientific and engineering research and fosters the development and use of computers. www.nsf.gov <<http://www.nsf.gov>> There are currently three RIRs: APNIC, ARIN, and RIPE NCC. These non-profit organizations are responsible for distributing IP addresses on a regional level to Internet service providers and local registries.

E-GOBIERNO

“E” DE EXPECTATIVA, DE ESPERANZA, DE EXCUSA

Miguel Porrúa Vigón

¿Qué quiere decir “e-gobierno”? ¿para que sirve? ¿cómo puede beneficiar a la gente? IPS preguntó esto a Miguel Porrúa Vigón, experto de la OEA (*).

Para bien de los ciudadanos que habitamos este mundo agitado por conflictos fronterizos, ideológicos, religiosos, el e-gobierno o gobierno electrónico ha dejado de ser uno de esos términos de moda, para convertirse en elemento central de muchas agendas políticas en muchos países independientemente de su nivel de desarrollo.

Como suele ocurrir con este tipo de conceptos novedosos, existe casi una definición por cada organismo internacional, centro de investigación o universidad, pero en el fondo todas transmiten la misma idea: es la aplicación de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TICs) a las diferentes actividades de gobierno, a las relaciones entre éste y sus administrados, y a la participación de estos en la actividad pública.

En la definición es importante no perder de vista la confluencia de las tecnologías de la información—que ya llevaban aplicándose al sector público más de 30 años— con las de la comunicación, cuyo hijo más popular en los últimos años, Internet, ha contribuido a añadir la “e” a esta nueva concepción de gobierno.

Conviene deslizar también algunas siglas que pueden ayudar al profano a comprender en qué se traduce el e-gobierno. El G2C (gobierno a ciudadanos), G2B (gobierno a negocios), G2G (gobierno a gobierno) y G2E (gobierno a empleados), describen los cuatro grandes ámbitos donde las TICs están contribuyendo a que esos procesos sean más sencillos y más eficientes.

Posiblemente tuvieron razón David Osborne y Ted Gaebler cuando en su libro

Reinventing Government—inspiración de la mayor parte de los actuales reformadores de la administración pública—dicen que el e-gobierno era la excusa que el sector público necesitaba para reinventarse.

Varios organismos internacionales, como la Agencia Interamericana para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo (AICD) de la OEA, el Banco Mundial, el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, la Organización for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) y las Naciones Unidas, tienen programas de desarrollo que incluyen el e-gobierno.

La Cumbre Mundial sobre la Sociedad de la Información, a pesar de las dificultades para consensuar declaraciones, acuerdos y planes, es un mensaje firme a la comunidad internacional sobre la importancia que los gobiernos conceden al asunto.

Existen ya numerosas experiencias de gobierno electrónico que han logrado que se empiecen a materializar muchas de las expectativas que había generado.

En Chile, cuando el presidente, Ricardo Lagos, pronunció su discurso de investidura en el 2001, el segundo punto de su intervención enfatizó el compromiso de su gobierno con el desarrollo del gobierno electrónico, lo que refleja una tendencia creciente en América Latina y El Caribe que ha visto como, desde Florianópolis (Québec), casi todas las cumbres presidenciales o reuniones ministeriales incluyen un apartado relacionado con la sociedad de la información y el gobierno electrónico.

Para 2001, Chile ya tenía desde hace algunos años un sistema de impuestos internos “en línea” que permite rellenar y pagar declaraciones; un sistema electrónico de compras públicas que procesa ya más del 50 por ciento de las compras públicas chilenas; y un programa ENLACES que tiene todas las escuelas del país conectadas a Internet.

Mención especial merece “Civil Sur”, el barco del Registro Civil de Chile, que surca ríos y lagos en el sur del país para llegar a las zonas más remotas ofreciendo e-gobierno mediante conexión satelital. Muchos habitantes de estas zonas rurales ahora evitan tener que perder uno o

dos días de trabajo para realizar cualquier trámite público.

Los que tenemos la fortuna de viajar por América Latina con frecuencia vemos también las aportaciones del e-gobierno en forma de empresas de Manta (Ecuador), que hacen negocios en los Estados Unidos; jóvenes de Villa La Angostura (Neuquén, Argentina), que estudian a distancia en universidades de Buenos Aires o de otros países del mundo; y en los millones de ciudadanos que están evitando largas colas y abultadas coimas. Para ellos, que habitan en una región azotada por problemas económicos y sociales, el e-gobierno electrónico contribuye a alimentar su esperanza de un entorno con más oportunidades.

Por supuesto que hay muchos aspectos que resolver sobre seguridad y privacidad. Claro que hay aún más aspectos que resolver sobre accesibilidad (conectividad y alfabetización digital), pero si el asunto se sitúa en un lugar de preponderante en las agendas de los gobiernos, las soluciones aparecerán, como apareció “Civil Sur”.

(*) Miguel A. Porrúa Vigón es Coordinador Programa de Gobierno Electrónico de la Agencia Interamericana para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo, ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS



SNIPPETS

MISSING

What: Thousands of copies of the Terra Viva summit newspaper produced by IPS, InfoSud and AWCIS; one newspaper stand.

When: Tuesday and Wednesday

Where: Palexpo – various sites

How: Case 1 (Tuesday): A woman who identified herself as an architect from Tunisia took an estimated 1,000 copies “for her friends” and responded angrily when questioned; Case 2 (Wednesday) Two women stuffed plastic bags full of newspapers. (They hurried away when questioned).

Why: Censorship in the information summit? Perhaps. Terra Viva has

published articles about Tunisia in its two editions to date, and will continue to do so as news warrants.

What you can do: Tell WSIS officials that you are offended by this type of behaviour, particularly at a conference that should embrace freedom of expression.

THE CHEAPEST FOOD AROUND

Terra Viva has noted the crush of NGO delegates at the entrance to the Media Centre in Hall 2. Ostensibly there to inform journalists of their cyber-activities and views, could it be that they are looking for a route to the food in the media lounge?

After all, it has the best prices in town: free for the 900 accredited me-

dia practitioners, compared to the 12-franc sandwiches and 3.20 franc coffee in the bustling La Brasserie, whose harassed waiters resemble nerve-frayed delegates at the end of a marathon negotiating session.

On the menu: cold sandwiches, croissants, juice, bottled water and even apples.

If only “free for media” could be transformed into “media freedom”.

TWO WHEELS BRIDGING THE ‘DIVIDE’

A former journalist in Cambodia has started a project that he says links 13 remote and impoverished villages populated by ethnic minorities with hospitals and other government ser-

vices for the first time.

The villages have no access to phones, radio, TV or newspapers, but thanks to equipment from private donors, they have set up computers in six new schools.

Messages written on those computers are sent via a wireless system to a village hub. Five days a week a motorcycle carrying a compatible system passes by the hub, automatically collecting the emails, which can include digital photos of patients diagnosed at distant hospitals in Cambodia and the United States.

www.cambodiaschools.com