

# **First Conference on Infopoverty: possible solutions**

## **Final Declaration**

**Milan, 18th June 2001**

In the light of the vast contribution of ideas and proposals furnished in the course of the First International Conference on the struggle against Infopoverty, held in Milan 18th June, 2001

the Institutions present at the conference, together with all the participants, propose to undersign the Declaration which follows:

in full awareness that the Digital Revolution is inducing a wide mutation in all fields of human activity

that a great divide has been produced between wealthier nations and the emerging, with the risk that the latter be excluded from such development and lose their cultural identity

that knowledge and technological applications comprise a patrimony restricted to only a few

that Internet, the innovative tool for interactive communication, presents access problems, is limited to advanced territories and sections, is accessed by user codes which not everyone is able to possess, it appears inadequate for connective capacities and applicable standards and is not particularly equipped to be employed for social and cultural ends

that the lack of shared global directions registered in these sectors leaves choices to the market which are not pertinent; that the present financial crisis may determine the fall itself of these innovative potentialities of social development, giving way to elite and even more discriminatory control

**Affirm:** the necessity of fighting all forms of inequality and discrimination between peoples, acknowledging the right of each single community to affirm and diffuse its own cultural identity

**Emphasize:** the requirement to guarantee a free and participatory access to the new means of communication to all, in order to construct a democratic society of knowledge

**Hope:** for the creation of networks having high social valences, of easy access and planetary diffusion, with the goal of giving tools and development opportunities to all

**Consider:** that it is extremely urgent to individuate new alliances between social exigencies and the world of production in order to get underway the creation of new cultural products and working procedures, directed in particular at the promotion of distance learning as the main tool to bridge the existing gap; the development of telemedicine, of microfinance and any other activity which can support the struggle against infopoverty and all forms of extreme poverty

**Recommend:** the rigorous observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as guiding light of future decisions concerning political, economic, technological and social choices implied in the process of globalisation

**Ask for the undertaking:** from the governmental institutions of the more advanced countries to realise forms of convergencies of traditional media finalised to the diffusion of knowledge, in the full respect of specific cultural identities

**Appeal:** to all the decision makers, whether they be heads of state, of leading institutions or multinationals, to work in the rigorous respect of this Declaration, reaffirming the primary role of the United Nations and relevant agencies for directions to guide future decisions on development

In order to render these recommendations more incisive and in order to take concrete action, this first Conference, having approved the outlines of the Action Plan, has decided to constitute itself as:

## **Permanent Forum for the fight against Infopoverty**

and confers on the Promoting Committee of this Conference the mandate to actuate these principles and:

1. to present this Declaration to the President of the Italian Republic **Mr. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi**, thanking him most heartily for his illuminating message and for his unceasing work in favour of developing countries
2. to present this Declaration to the President of the Italian Council of Ministers **Mr. Silvio Berlusconi**, as an immediate step in view of the coming G8 Summit in Genova, under the Italian Presidency, in July 2001. This forum will support the design of worldwide initiatives in order to fight against Infopoverty and to bridge the digital divide, based on the special cases presented during this Milan First International

Conference, as real successful experiences of remote communities integrated through technologies, as possible solutions.

3. to present this Declaration to the President of the European Commission **Mr. Romano Prodi** as contribution that may be referred to for the activities of the European Union in this sector and, in particular, as operative proposal for the European-Latin American Summit to be held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002

4. to submit this Declaration to the General Secretary of the United Nations **Mr. Kofi Annan**, to the President of the UNESCO Executive Board **Mrs. Sonia Mendieta de Badaroux**, to the General Director of UNESCO **Mr. Koichiro Matura**, to the President of the European Parliament **Mrs. Nicole Fontaine**, and to the other eminent International Authorities, that this resolution may be taken up by all the Governments and the competent International Organizations, in order to act upon and promote the worldwide implementation of the action plan, outlined during this International Conference as an instrument to fight against Infopoverty.