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PROGRAMME

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Access to information is fundamental to all aspects of our lives – in learning, at work, in staying healthy, improving our individual and collective rights, in being entertained, in knowing our history, in maintaining our cultures and languages and in participating actively in democratic societies. Documents adopted during the World Summit on the Information Society show a clear link between the human and the broader societal, cultural and economic dimensions of information access and use.

As noted in two documents adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (*Declaration on human rights and the rule of law in the Information Society, 2005*, and *Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)16 on measures to promote the public service value of the Internet*), the ICTs offer unprecedented opportunities to enjoy human rights. As stated forcefully in WSIS outcome documents, this translates into an obligation for States and the international community to ensure enjoyment of these opportunities by everyone.

One of UNESCO's signal contributions to the Information Society debate is the concept of Knowledge Societies. This draws attention to the people impacts of the Information Society, and especially the four pillars – knowledge creation, knowledge preservation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge utilisation. These four pillars are based on the principles of inclusion and pluralism, which in turn derive from underlying human needs and rights.

The OECD speaks of knowledge economy, or “knowledge-driven economies” to signify the complex and all-encompassing change leading – though at a different pace in different parts of the world – to the emergence of the “knowledge society” and the “knowledge-based economy.”

“Information for all” could mean Information literate communities, where as the Alexandria Proclamation of 2005 on Information Literacy puts it, “people in all walks of life are empowered to seek, evaluate, use, and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals.”

In the coming years, the Information for All Programme of UNESCO will concentrate on implementing the following overarching objective:

“to help Member States develop and implement national information policies and knowledge strategies in a world increasingly using information and communication technologies (ICT)”

We believe that IFAP can make the most effective contribution by assisting Member States develop and implement national information policy frameworks. A crucial strength of IFAP in pursuing this goal is its intergovernmental structure and mandate. IFAP's policy and standard-setting focus requires a reasoned debate between, and input provided by, governments of countries representing different societal, cultural and economic backgrounds.

Within the context the above overarching goal of information policy frameworks, IFAP will focus on five priorities: **information for development, information accessibility, information literacy, information preservation and information ethics.**

Each Member State is unique in developing and implementing an information policy framework. The effective deployment of these frameworks is dependent on many different elements, including the availability of communications infrastructure (connectivity), the skills of people in using information (capability) and the accessibility and availability of information itself (content). As an intergovernmental programme, IFAP has a special opportunity to assist and influence Member State governments. It will do so by developing a general template or templates for information and knowledge strategies and policies (for groups of countries with different needs), to be supplemented by the results of specialized working groups, dealing with each of the priorities listed above. IFAP will consult with member states and partner organisations to identify countries that recognise the benefits of a national information policy framework. It will also monitor the information policy development processes and advise Member States on relevant models.

Five strategic programme objectives have been identified to correspond with each of the above five priorities:

1. Mainstreaming the importance of information in national development plans;
2. Fostering information literate societies;
3. Identifying and promoting cost-effective technical solutions for information preservation;
4. Raising awareness of ethical issues related to information;
5. Enhancing universal and multilingual accessibility to information.

This programme of activities is oriented to producing *inter alia* the following results over the next 6 years: parameters for national information policy frameworks ; information for development – good practices; information literacy indicators; information literacy strategies in national education policies; cost-effective technical solutions for information preservation; ethical issues of emerging technologies debated and highlighted in national information policies; role of free and open source software; capacities and competencies of information professionals enhanced; international research agenda supporting information for all goals.

Success in developing the Information/Knowledge Society will determine prospects awaiting all individuals and nations. It is one of the fundamental challenges facing mankind. IFAP is determined to do its part in meeting that challenge.