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PRESS RELEASE
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Paving the Road to Tunis - WSIS II: The Views of Canada's Civil Society on the Geneva Plan of Action and the Prospects for Phase II

Winnipeg, May 12, 2005. Representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector of all provinces and territories will gather in Winnipeg this week-end to discuss issues related to building information societies in Canada as part of a conference organized by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO in preparation for the second phase of the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS).

The conference entitled *Paving the Road to Tunis - WSIS II: The Views of Canada's Civil Society on the Geneva Plan of Action and the Prospects for Phase II* taking place from May 13-15 will bring together approximately 200 participants to obtain their views on the Geneva Plan of Action from the perspective of Canadian civil society. Participants will examine the status of major elements included in the Plan of Action: infrastructure, cost of access, public domain, open source, community networking, adapted technologies, education, traditional media, freedom of expression in both traditional and new media, cultural diversity, preservation of indigenous languages, partnerships with developing countries, Internet governance and applications.

The first phase of WSIS took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from December 10-12, 2003, and addressed a broad range of themes concerning the information society. It also adopted a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. The second phase will take place in Tunis, Tunisia, from November 16-18, 2005 and will assess the implementation of the Action Plan adopted in Geneva.

"This is a unique opportunity for civil society to assess the Canadian situation on matters related to information and communication technologies and traditional media and to reflect on future orientations. The key word is access to information and knowledge. This has become a critical issue if we want to keep pace socially and economically in our global world. But there are essential conditions to fulfill if we want to guarantee genuine access to all citizens. This is what this conference is about and we hope that the ideas and suggestions made by civil society will be taken in consideration for future policy initiatives," said Max Wyman, President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

The conference will open on Friday night with a keynote address by Ann Medina, one of the North America's most well known and respected broadcast journalists and producers. Medina is the host of "History on Film" on History Television. Her speech will address the question: *Has Canada become a genuine knowledge society?*

The Honourable Reginald B. Alcock, President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and the Honourable David Walter Chomiak, Manitoba Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, will participate in the opening of the conference.

The role of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO is to act as a forum for governments and civil society, and to mobilize the participation of Canadian organizations and committed individuals in UNESCO's mandated areas: education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information.

The results of the conference will be presented to the Government of Canada so that the accomplishments made by civil society can be shared with other delegations at the Summit. The final report of the conference will be prepared and distributed at the 33rd UNESCO General Conference in October 2005 in Paris, France, and at the Summit in November 2005 in Tunis, Tunisia.

The conference received financial support from Foreign Affairs Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Industry Canada and International Development Research Centre. The Canadian Commission also gratefully acknowledges the co-operation and support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

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