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OBSERVATORY FOR CULTURAL AND AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION  
*CREATED BY UNESCO IN 1997, ACTING AGENCY OF THE INFOPOVERTY PROGRAM*

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Madame chairperson

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is a great pleasure to have this honour to greet you as the President of OCCAM,  
I'm Pierpaolo Saporito.

OCCAM is the Observatory for Cultural Communication created by UNESCO in 1997 and the acting agency of the Infopoverty Program aimed at fighting poverty through ICT.

Taking seriously the goal of halving the people living in extreme poverty by 2015 means having a deep understanding of the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals, and of the political and moral commitments undersigned by all stakeholders.

It is history that tells us that the plague of poverty is an atavistic condition, generating revolutions and wars, as well as that poverty is not always a natural disaster: it has clear roots. Overbearing, theft, violence are collateral bases of this phenomenon. Today we all have to fight poverty eradicating its racial, economic and environmental roots, which are specific for each kind of poverty. 3 are the main paths to be followed: contrasting criminal behaviour, individuating different economic models and tackling incidental causes.

Criminal behaviours affecting communities, depriving them of natural resources, polluting water, burning forests, exploiting the generosity of donors must be individuated and fought, ending the illegal profit based on the exploitation of poor people and their needs. If this strategy was effective, more than fifty percent of the problem would be resolved at no costs.

Referring to the models of development, the threshold of 1 or 2US dollars a day is insufficient, because it does not take into account the fact that many communities live in a pre-monetary economy, and moving away from a financially-based model would lead to a more direct and active participation in and sharing of human, scientific, cultural and material resources of rich and poor countries together. The univocal model must be transformed into a plurality of models, respecting cultural diversity and local different approaches to development, thus causing a drastic lowering of the perceived gap. The real needs of poor communities: lack of food, water, jobs, education, and health could be rapidly overcome if policies of inclusion and diffusion of scientific and technical knowledge (that were at the origins of the industrial revolution) were developed.

We must not forget that the western civilisation has its recent roots in the industrial revolution, which has made possible the eradication of poverty of the eighty percent of the European and North American population.

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Having entered in the digital revolution, with the wealth of solutions Information and Communication Technologies bring, it would be absurd not to exploit this historical opportunity and put the ICTs at the service of the development of disadvantaged communities throughout the world, supporting health and education strategies able to optimise agriculture, to promote trade and, also thanks to microcredit, to spur productivity.

Today this is possible thanks to connectivity, which has to be regarded (as the World Summit on the Information Society recently pointed out) as a fundamental right for all communities.

OCCAM, as acting agency of the Infopoverty Programme, has been working on this in the last seven years, and on the basis of our experience in Honduras in 1999, in two villages in South Lebanon, in the Chapter Houses created in 2003-2005 in the Navajo Nation providing broadband internet with high level services such as telemedicine and e-learning.

It is now clear that once local communities are empowered thanks to connectivity and services for development, they can in a short elapse of time become active participants of the global economy, preserving their diversity and achieving high levels of competence, also providing innovative solutions to development issues.

In this regard OCCAM has worked together with many international institutions, including FAO, ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ESA and the Oklahoma University, and we have realised an ICT Village model that was certified during the WSIS 2005.

This model aims at providing connectivity and adequate services such as telemedicine, e-learning and e-government which can really change the lives of disadvantaged communities in developing countries. Our work now, within the UN Alliance for Rural Development, is to extend this model to many villages in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic, the pilot countries of the Alliance.

All these issues will constitute the focus of the VI Infopoverty World Conference: "Fighting poverty to create prosperity for all" that will take place in UN-Ny connected via videoconference with parallel meetings in Milan, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Madagascar, Dominican Republic, Geneva, Windows Rocks and others on April 20 and 21. The conference will analyse the current best practices and how the ICTs can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular regards to poverty eradication, taking into account all 3 form of poverty we have individuated.

**Madame Chairperson, in the light of the above, OCCAM recommends:**

- To include the Infopoverty World Conference 2006 in the list of events shaping future policies in poverty reduction utilizing the ICTs and whose results will be made available to all stakeholders in the weeks following the event.
- To recognize indigenous people as special groups related to the Millennium Development Goals, with special regards to poverty eradication as well as health, and literacy.

- To sustain the portal for poor countries and Indigenous people as resulted in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the ITU, the Navajo Nation and OCCAM on the occasion of the World Summit on the Information Society 2005.

Finally OCCAM is at the full disposal of all emerging countries to realize there the ICT Village and deliver services of telemedicine, e-learning, e-governance and others according to modalities that will be defined on the occasion of the next Infopoverty World Conference to which I am glad to invite you all to participate.