

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**MESSAGE FOR LAUNCH OF UNESCO SPECIAL INITIATIVE
FOR NATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF COMMUNITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRES
IN MALI, MOZAMBIQUE AND SENEGAL**

Geneva, 10 December 2003

Delivered by Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General, UNESCO

A community multimedia centre – where local people themselves run their own radio station, can use telephones and the Internet and enjoy access to other information services and training – is a tremendous platform for development. Though their use is only in its earliest stages, already we have seen the gains: in key areas such as education, health, agriculture and environmental protection; in the empowerment of women and young people; and, in the broadest sense, in helping a community to take charge of its own future.

Our challenge now is to “scale up” – from micro to macro, from pilot projects to widely accessible facilities. Only then will CMCs realize their enormous potential to make a positive difference in the lives of the poor and marginalized.

The communities in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal that are participating in this initiative are highly mobilized, eager to engage with the knowledge-based economy. The three Heads of State have personally committed themselves to championing the initiative, providing the high-level political will that is crucial for ensuring that the necessary regulatory and policy measures will be put in place and that national institutional partners will be brought on board. And the United Nations system is committed to doing its part through a multi-stakeholder partnership led by UNESCO in conjunction with other UN agencies, civil society, the private sector and bilateral development agencies.

Community access to information technology resources is essential if the digital divide is to be bridged in the developing world. I congratulate all those who are making possible this creative, concrete contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society. The United Nations and I look forward to working with you all to build an open, inclusive information society that benefits all the world’s people.