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29 September 2005

**PARLIAMENTARY PANEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE
SECOND PHASE OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Tunis (Tunisia), 17 November 2005

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) represents a milestone in a unique process launched by the United Nations in 2002 to debate the shape and future of the Information Society. In Geneva in December 2003, the first phase of the Summit adopted a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. The second phase focuses on the implementation of these objectives.

The IPU is convinced that parliaments must be recognized as essential partners for government, the private sector and civil society in the construction of the Information Society. Parliaments have an important role to play in implementation of WSIS objectives at national level and also at the regional and international levels, which are especially vital in the light of the possibilities offered by the Internet for the rapid transmission of information and knowledge around the world.

The IPU has consistently sought to ensure that the voice of parliaments is represented within the Summit, which seeks to ensure that information and knowledge can be accessed and shared by everyone. Indeed, this is a subject that is at the core of democracy, as it concerns the ability of people to participate fully in public life.

I am therefore pleased to invite you to a Parliamentary Panel on the occasion of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. Its purpose is to provide a forum for debate by parliamentarians from all over the world and to contribute to the process of building knowledge societies.

The meeting, co-organized by the IPU and the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies in cooperation with UNESCO, will take place **on the premises of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies on Thursday, 17 November 2005** from 3 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. It will examine the special role of parliaments in building knowledge societies, with a particular focus on the question of access to information. This issue will be considered from two angles: parliaments' ability to obtain information they need for their work; and legislation guaranteeing the rights of citizens to gain access to information.

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The Parliamentary Panel will provide an opportunity for participants to increase their understanding of the questions surrounding access to information, to debate the issues and to share experiences, with the help of a moderator and a panel of parliamentarians and international experts. It will also feed into the debate at the World Summit, where the results of the Panel will be presented, and facilitate parliamentary involvement in the follow-up to the WSIS process.

I would like to point out that all matters relating to visas, hotel accommodation and transportation of participants should be taken care of by participants. I also encourage parliamentarians attending the Parliamentary Panel to take the opportunity to participate in the Summit itself. As many thousands of delegates are expected at WSIS, it is strongly recommended that parliamentarians attend the Summit as part of their national delegation to WSIS in order to simplify matters of transport, accommodation and accreditation.

Enclosed you will find a provisional programme, a practical information note for delegates and a registration form for the Parliamentary Panel, which I invite you to return to the IPU Secretariat **no later than 28 October 2005**. This information will also be posted on the IPU web site at <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/wsis05.htm>.

Looking forward to the participation of your parliament in the Parliamentary Panel, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders B. Johnsson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General