

**ITALY**  
**CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**

**Hon. Marco Airaghi**

Hon. President,

Hon. Members,

In my brief contribution I would like to substantiate a very simple and clear hypothesis: in my opinion, **the role of Parliaments** in fostering a political environment conducive to the development of the Information Society **has been** - until now - **largely underestimated**.

The development of the Information Society is generally seen as a mostly spontaneous process, led by the private sector and conditioned by economic and cultural constraints that - quite often - cannot be reversed in the short-term. On the other hand, the task of promoting ICT policies and elaborating national e-strategies has been performed by governments even in the most developed countries.

At the international level this underestimation can be perceived in the lack of a specific “parliamentary dimension” of the World Summit on Information Society (held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005) and in its current implementation.

You know that *Tunis Commitment* and *Tunis Declaration* don't bring any specific reference to the role of Parliaments.

Nevertheless, Parliaments' involvement in this regard is absolutely crucial.

The theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of IPAIT “Human Competency Development in the Information Society” clearly demonstrates the pivotal role that Parliamentary Assemblies can play in establishing a global, equitable and inclusive Information Society.

In this connection, how can a society fill its internal digital divide with more developed countries without an active role of its national Parliament?

Parliament - much more than the Executive - should be the main actor and promoter of a national policy aimed at improving human resources at large, by establishing a consistent legislative framework, by exercising its oversight function on the Government in the implementation of ICT policies, as well as on the participation of local authorities and civil society.

Developing the Information Society is not a neutral or technical goal, rather a political one. And this goal calls for the involvement of the whole society and therefore for the participation of all political parties (each playing its own role), just like it is the case in parliamentary activity.

Once this policy starts to produce some positive effects thus allowing the Information Society to develop, then new rights emerge, some of which enshrined in the Constitution. The role of Parliament is once again crucial and irreplaceable.

These are the themes of **the International Conference that will be hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2007** titled "The policymaking role of Parliaments in the development of the Information Society".

I am pleased to officially inform you that the Speakers and Presidents of about **180 national and regional Parliamentary Assemblies** have been invited to send a delegation to this Conference hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies, in its Assembly Hall.

We expect more than 400 participants in the Conference.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Inter-Parliamentary Union are providing substantive and organizational support to the conference through the **Global Centre for ICT in Parliament**.

The Global Centre was presented during the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the IPAIT: those who attended that Assembly will certainly remember it.

This initiative will represent the first global event promoted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

The Conference aims at gathering inputs to be included in a document by the Conference Presidency containing **recommendations on how national and regional assemblies could best address and concretely contribute to the effective implementation of the Information Society**, thus adding a key parliamentary dimension to it.

We plan to conclude the Conference finalising a document about the parliamentary dimension of Information Society and to propose this document for the adoption by the Interparliamentary Union and - through it - to the United Nations, in order to enrich the framework of the World Summit on Information Society.

The Conference will therefore provide a platform for a global inter-parliamentary dialogue on some critical issues, such as:

- a) *Effectiveness of institutional architectures for governing the Information Society*
- b) *The impact of the Information Society on the economy*
- c) *Protection of rights and the Information Society*
- d) *Confidence and security*
- e) *The role of Parliament in setting priorities within the Information Society.*

The President and the Vice President of the IPAIT will be invited to attend the Conference and to present the activity of IPAIT.

During an informative session a contribution to present IPAIT by its founder and current Chair will be welcome.

Information about the Conference will be made available on the Web site of the Chamber of Deputies.

We are confident that the Rome Conference will offer inputs to the IPAIT ongoing dialogue, and that, in the future, IPAIT and the Global Centre can mutually benefit from an intense cooperation.

We are looking forward to welcoming in Rome, next March, many of the participants in this General Assembly.