

**Message of the Director of UNESCO Maputo
on the occasion of the W3C Workshop: "Africa Perspective
on the Role of Mobile Technologies in Fostering
Social and Economic Development"**

MAPUTO, Mozambique
April 1-2, 2009

(Delivered on her behalf by the Project Coordinator in the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO Maputo)

UNESCO is the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, Culture, Communication and Information. In its Constitution, which was signed in 1945, it was written that: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." This mission is as valid today as it was 64 years ago. Although, in these days of gender equity, I guess we can say "in the minds of men *and* women".

As it has been said before, keeping peace goes much further than simply not waging wars. Development is crucial for societies to live and grow in harmony and cannot be achieved without participation. Giving communities opportunities to share their own knowledge and learn from other people's experiences is a fundamental step. UNESCO's main objective in the Communication and Information sector is: "to build inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication". Specifically, there are two main priorities for the current biennium: i) fostering free, independent and pluralistic communication and universal access to information; and ii) promoting innovative applications of ICTs for sustainable development.

In Mozambique, UNESCO supports initiatives that promote training for media professionals, capacity building in media literacy, the adoption of legislation to foster freedom of expression and the right to information, and the use of Information and Communication Technologies for development. Of particular interest to this conference may be the Community Multimedia Centre initiative. Community Multimedia Centres (or CMCs, as they are often referred to) combine community radio with telecentres thereby improving access to information and education and providing opportunities for

communications, information exchange and networking among communities. In this context, mobile technologies have allowed volunteers in remote communities to gather information and network with people facing the same hurdles elsewhere.

We welcome W3C's focus on Africa and look forward to engaging in a dialogue that will result in partnerships aimed at enhancing the use of mobile technologies to foster local development. We hope the workshop will also provide an opportunity to address some of the main challenges that we face: in particular, the issues of cost and connectivity, production and circulation of content and capacity building.

Finally, UNESCO would like to reiterate its commitment to promoting the empowerment of people through access to information. We believe information, communication and knowledge are at the core of human progress and development. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of this important workshop.

Thank you. Muito obrigada!

For further information, please contact:

- Cristiana Pereira
Project Coordinator
Communication and Information Sector
UNESCO Maputo
Email: c.pereira@unesco.org
Phone: +258-21481731
Cell: +258-826422085