



## **iPC - the Civil Society ICT Policy Collaboratory**

Dear WSIS Civil Society Member,

The Collaboratory on Technology Enhanced Learning Communities ([www.cotelco.net](http://www.cotelco.net)), a research group at the University of Michigan directed by Dr. Derrick L. Cogburn, and International Possibilities Unlimited ([www.ipunlimited.org](http://www.ipunlimited.org)), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) directed by Dr. Deborah Robinson, are currently building partnerships in planning for a major initiative to support civil society's participation in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and in global ICT policy formulation more broadly. We invite you to help us continue planning and building this initiative by joining us on Wednesday 12 November 2003 for our first real-time, online organizational meeting. The meeting will be held in our virtual seminar room in cyberspace to accommodate remote participation from around the world. Also at this meeting, we will have a live report and updates from delegates attending PrepCom-3a.

This initiative, called the iPC - the Civil Society ICT Policy Collaboratory, builds on and compliments the excellent efforts already underway within the civil society sector to use computer-mediated communication tools. It aims to enhance the effective participation of civil society actors from around the world – those actively involved in global policy processes, and those who have yet to participate – in the multiple and complex processes of global governance. The iPC builds on our extensive collective knowledge base, developed over the last two decades of supporting the collaborative work of scientists across countries and continents, supporting the work of graduate students engaged in globally distributed collaborative learning, and supporting the involvement of grassroots organizations in international fora.

Our approach to the iPC focuses on a collaborative user-centered design. This approach allows us to develop a deep understanding of users' needs in order to design and deploy the appropriate socio-technical infrastructure. While the specific features of the iPC will be developed in consultation with you and other colleagues, we envision using web-based tools with the following functionalities:

- Synchronous, real-time, video and audio web-conferencing
- High quality voice and video communication over IP
- Presence awareness and text chatting
- Multi-media content delivery (e.g. PowerPoint slides, movies, and websites)
- Application sharing
- Collaborative white boards
- Virtual seminar rooms for plenary sessions
- Virtual break-out rooms for working groups and caucuses
- Moderated discussions and turn-taking
- Online deliberation and decision-making tools (polling)
- Recording of virtual sessions for personal playback later

We see the iPC unfolding over time, using this technical infrastructure to enable real-time collaboration between civil society members spread out around the world. For example, these tools could possibly support the civil society structures in the following kinds of activities:

- Content & Themes (C&T)
  - Debates on thematic contributions and integrating CS positions
  - Administrative meetings
  
- Civil Society Bureau (CSB)
  - Administrative meetings
  - Interaction amongst family members
  
- Selected Thematic Caucuses & Working Groups (TC&WG)
  - Knowledge sharing (seminars and lectures)
  - Preparing thematic inputs into C&T processes
  - Administrative meetings
  - Debates and discussions
  
- Civil Society Plenary (CSP)
  - Orientation of new participants
  - Updates and information sharing
  - Knowledge development through seminars
  - Access to digital repositories

There are undoubtedly other potential uses of the iPC. In order to help explore these and other possibilities, please join us for an online orientation meeting live from PrepCom-3a. The meeting will be held on **Wednesday, 12 November 2003 at 16:00 Geneva time (10:00 EST; 15:00 GMT)** using a commercially available web-conferencing tool provided by Cotelco. Space in the iPC virtual seminar room is limited, and will be open only to the first forty virtual participants. To participate, point your web browser to the following URL and follow the instructions: <http://tinyurl.com/tsh1> (Unfortunately Macs cannot be accommodated unless they are running OS X and virtual PC). Please run the “System Check” before attempting to participate in the meeting. During this meeting we will provide:

- (1) An update on progress and activities in PrepCom-3a;
- (2) A brief training session on the collaboration tools;
- (3) An overview of the study and its collaborative action research component, and
- (4) A discussion of possible ways to move forward.

Initial funding for this initiative is provided by the University of Michigan and the Alliance for Community Technology. Additional support is currently under funding review at the US National Science Foundation.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please do not hesitate to contact us. Derrick can be reached at [dcogburn@umich.edu](mailto:dcogburn@umich.edu) and Deborah at [drdrobinson@ipunlimited.org](mailto:drdrobinson@ipunlimited.org). Derrick will be in Geneva from Sunday, 9 November until Saturday, 15 November and we would welcome any additional discussions about the iPC.

We look forward to collaborating with you!

Kindest regards,

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 University of Michigan

Deborah Robinson, Ph.D.  
 Executive Director  
 International Possibilities Unlimited