gender component into all its programmes and to improve its collaboration with its Gender Advisory Board.

In other action, the Council, by **decision 2003/291** of 24 July, decided that the duration of the regular sessions of the Commission should be one week. By **decision 2003/293** of the same date, the Council took note of the report of the Commission on its sixth session and approved the provisional agenda and documentation for the Commission's seventh (2004) session.

Information and communication technologies

In 2003, the United Nations continued to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially ICTs, were available to all, in conformity with recommendations contained in the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 2000 high-level segment [YUN 2000, p. 799] and the Millennium Declaration [ibid., p. 49]. In December, the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society adopted a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action that outlined specific goals for bridging the digital divide. The second phase of the Summit was scheduled to be held in 2005. During the year, the UN ICT Task Force continued its substantive work as a global forum on integrating information on ICT into development programmes.

World Summit on the
Information Society (first phase)

The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, 10-12 December) [WSIS-03/GENEVA/9(Rev.1)-E] was attended by political leaders from 175 countries, including 44 heads of State or Government, and representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector. It adopted the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action for establishing the foundations for an information society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake. In three round tables, the Summit discussed the themes of creating digital opportunities; diversity in cyberspace; and ICT as a tool for achieving the MDGs. It also considered reports on a number of multi-stakeholder events held in preparation for the Summit. Planned in two phases, the Summit was the first multi-stakeholder global effort to share and shape the use of ICTs for a better world. The second phase was to be held in Tunis, Tunisia, in November 2005.

Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action

The Declaration of Principles adopted on 12 December, "Building the information society: a global challenge in the new Millennium", stated the commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society to enable people to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life. The challenge was to harness the potential of ICT to promote the MDGs [YUN 2000, p. 51]. The Summit committed itself to realizing that vision, focusing especially on young people and paying attention to the needs of women and of vulnerable groups, particularly the poor in remote rural and marginalized urban areas and the peoples of developing countries and economies in transition. Recognizing that building an inclusive information society required new forms of partnerships and cooperation among Governments and other stakeholders to realize the goal of bridging the digital divide and ensuring harmonious, fair and equitable development for all, the Summit called for national and international digital solidarity.

The Declaration enumerated key principles for an information society for all, covering the role of Governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development: information and communication infrastructure as an essential foundation for an inclusive information society; access to information and knowledge; capacity-building; building confidence and security in the use of ICTs; creating an enabling environment at the national and international levels based on the rule of law within a supportive policy and regulatory framework; and the benefits in all aspects of life of ICT applications. The key principles also covered respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, freedom of the press, the ethical dimensions of the information society and international and regional cooperation. All stakeholders were invited to commit to the "Digital Solidarity Agenda" set forth in the Plan of Action (see below). The Summit participants also committed themselves to evaluate and follow up progress in bridging the digital divide and to assess the effectiveness of investment and international cooperation efforts in building the information society.

The Plan of Action, based on the common vision and guiding principles of the Declaration, had as its objectives to build an inclusive information society; to put the potential of knowledge and ICTs at the service of development; to promote the use of information and knowledge to achieve internationally agreed development goals; and to address new challenges of the information society at all levels. Specific targets for improving connectivity and access in the use of ICTs, to be achieved by 2015, included: connecting villages with ICTs and establishing community access