

# Side event at the World Summit on the Information Society

## Sustainability in the Information Society

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Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have profound implications for environmental sustainability. For example, the energy use associated with producing and using computers is significant, as are the structural shifts in energy use due to ICT-induced shifts in business practice and consumption patterns. ICTs show potential to shift economic activity to a sustainable direction by improving environmental efficiency and substituting for transport (e.g. via telecommuting). There are also many possible uses for ICTs to help manage air and water quality or otherwise increase our knowledge about the environment. However, current policies do not aim at exploiting this potential but thus far only address direct impacts of computers.

Environmental considerations are part of the set of issues tackled at WSIS. This side event is intended as a platform for information exchange and brainstorming, to realize concrete action and to ensure effective inclusion of sustainability issues in the WSIS agenda and action plan.



**When: 9:30-12:30,  
December 10, 2003**

**Where: Hall 2, Room R,  
Palexpo, Geneva,  
Switzerland**

**Organizers:**

*Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne,  
Switzerland*

*United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan*

*Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and  
Research (EMPA), St. Gallen, Switzerland*



**Program:**

9:30– 11.00 Part I: Introduction to issues  
----- Impacts of ICT infrastructure on the environment; energy consumption; the waste side; direct and indirect benefits; North/South issues

11:15 – 12:30 Part II: Working session: Action plan

----- This session is devoted to identifying opportunities and obstacles for societal response to the sustainability of ICTs. Both impacts to be minimized (e-waste, energy consumption) and the positive potential of ICTs to be maximized (eco-efficiency, management of air/water quality, crises) are discussed.

Societal response includes research/analysis, government policies, firm and consumer actions. Issues to tackle are:

- \* What is currently being done to promote sustainability via ICTs?
- \* What are the gaps in issues tackled and institution response?
- \* What kinds of action are needed to improve social response?

The final output of the session will be a draft set of recommended actions for the future and how to establish a process by which these are carried out.



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**More information:**

<http://www.wsis.ethz.ch/wsissideevent.htm>

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