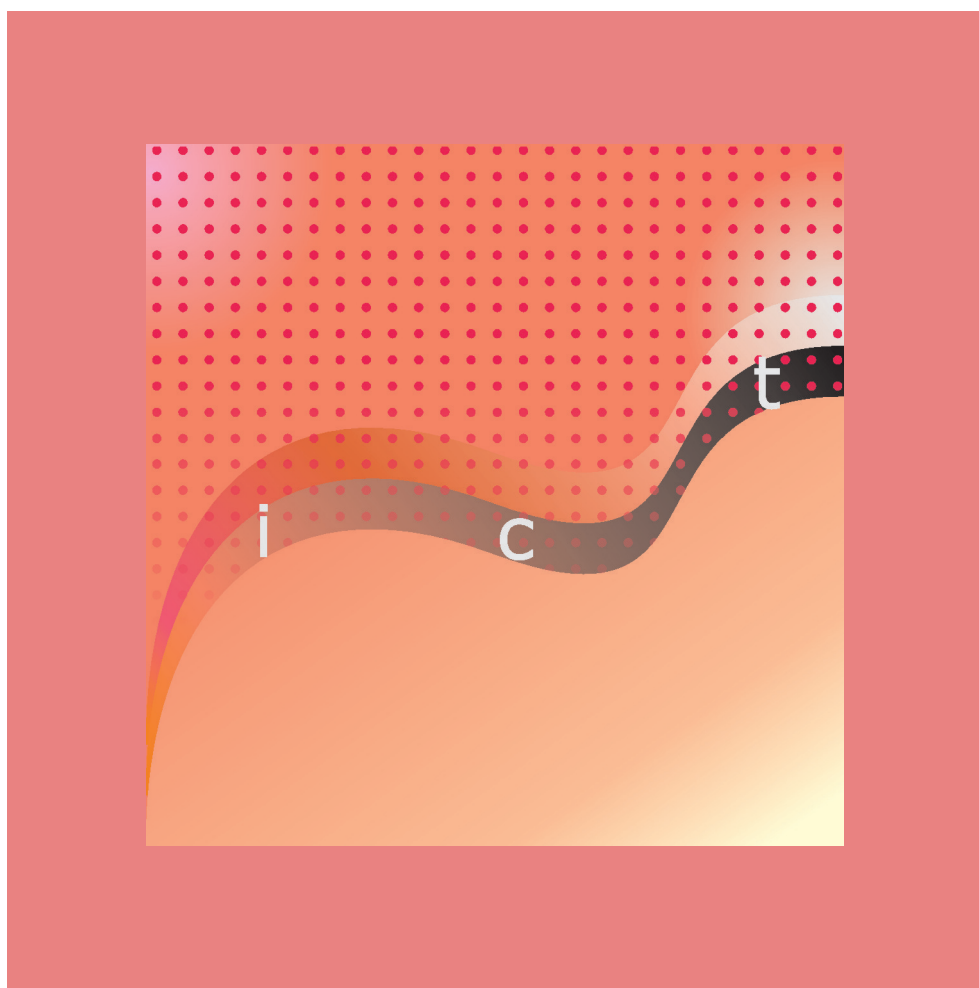


United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

INFORMATION ECONOMY REPORT 2005

Prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat



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Foreword

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the potential to profoundly change global trade, finance and production. By making businesses more competitive and economies more productive, and most of all by empowering people with knowledge, ICTs can support faster economic growth and thus strengthen the material basis for development. Our challenge is to ensure that this potential is used to generate real gains in the global struggle against poverty, disease and ignorance – and their offspring, fear, intolerance and war.

This *Information Economy Report 2005* is being published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to coincide with the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, at which the international community is expected to agree on further steps to realize the full potential of ICTs. The Report highlights the extent to which developing countries are striving to close the gap that separates the “information haves and have-nots”. It also describes the enormous challenges the world still faces in key areas such as increasing access to the Internet and strengthening the security of the online environment. Most important, it shows that when there is awareness, political will and stakeholder involvement in national “e-strategies”, progress in the use of ICTs for development is already an exciting reality.

New technologies and applications continue to emerge. Current technologies are maturing, and old ones are finding new uses. We must ensure that developing countries are not left further behind by all these dramatic changes, but can join in and benefit from them in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This Report is meant to contribute to that effort, and it is in that spirit that I commend its information, analysis and recommendations to participants in the Summit and to a wide global audience.



Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations

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