The International Researchers' Charter for Knowledge Societies (IAMCR)

To: UN – WSIS

The International Researchers' Charter for Knowledge Societies
– an IAMCR contribution to the WSIS –

Worldwide, research activity is confronted by diminishing budgets and increasing control of output by a variety of actors including governments, while researchers are being submitted to unprecedented and deleterious changes in their status, salaries and the independence of their investigations. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has helped to foster discussion worldwide on the need for unhindered and equal access to the means of communication and information content. The importance of information arising from high quality research in the humanities and the sciences has not, however, been sufficiently emphasized during the Summit. It has not emphasized the central role played by researchers in producing information, in promoting a better understanding of media and information and communication technology (ICT) systems and their content and functions, and in developing culturally relevant content and fostering communication in support of the attainment of inclusive and people-centred Knowledge Societies. Therefore, the International Association for Media and Communications Research (IAMCR) calls upon researchers worldwide to subscribe to the following Researchers' Charter principles and recommendations for action:

Charter Principles:

1. Researchers worldwide constitute a community of scholars that is central to the development of societies in which knowledge, information and culture are produced and appropriated in the service of humankind and in which researchers are entitled to seek, retrieve, receive and distribute information freely, regardless of geographical borders, ideologies and interets, and the medium used, supported by information exchange enabled by ICTs;

2. Researchers' work should be conducted in working conditions which acknowledge that research is crucial to knowledge production and intellectual development and that researchers' contributions to knowledge are significant in achieving a better understanding among peoples, cultures, religions and disciplinary traditions;

3. Researchers should be entitled to intellectual freedom and to transparent evaluation of their results by independent, legitimate public bodies; to express themselves as freely as possible without censorship or curtailment of the distribution of their intellectual outputs using all media and ICTs so as to maintain and expand the global public domain of research and to foster the capacity to contribute to cultural diversity, as well as to ensure informed participation by all citizens in social, cultural and economic activities, thereby promoting a democratic environment at all levels and in all contexts;

4. The results of publicly funded research should remain in the public domain so as to support the development, education and welfare of the general population; public archives, librar-

ies, repositories of content and other Internet and information services worldwide should be accessible to researchers without barriers to access;

5. The universal free exchange among researchers of intellectual work should be regarded as being of critical importance to maintaining a democratic order; it is integral to capacity building for equitable development, to overcoming differences in gender and training, particularly with respect to women and junior researchers especially in developing countries, and in accessing other resources essential for development; it must be regarded as a common good and nurtured as a participatory, ethical and collective process involving a network of distributed intellectual work that contributes to lifelong capacity-building, supporting human rights in all realms of human activity;

6. Culturally appropriate learning and research practices should be developed to foster community-based self-supporting systems of research; to promote open, collaborative and self-organizing publishing models and software development methods that are accessible to researchers and available in not-for-profit databases, libraries and archives; thereby supporting researchers as content producers and as active participants in the open access paradigm of knowledge creation and exchange, as outlined in various initiatives.

Implementing the Charter:

a. IAMCR invites all researchers, including educators and computer and information science professionals, to adhere to the above principles, by signing this Charter.

b. IAMCR invites researchers to strengthen opportunities for cooperation and exchange and to foster communication with all sectors of society with the aim of promoting greater understanding of the role and relevance of research and knowledge and their wide dissemination in society, by mobilizing decision makers worldwide to develop clear policies to implement the above principles.

c. IAMCR recommends the establishment of an independent international Researchers' Complaints body where researchers can lodge complaints about violations of the above principles and ethical standards and receive an unbiased hearing; such a body should have a mandate to make cases public and to publicise university administrations and governments that violate these principles.

Signing this Charter:
IAMCR invites the world's leading bodies that support these principles and individuals to sign this Charter at IAMCR's website – www.iamcr.net – and to disseminate this Charter widely.

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http://www.iamcr.net