

## In Focus: ICT Drives Information Societies

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# Governments Endorse ICT for Achieving Information Societies

Over 54 Heads of State, Prime Ministers, Presidents and 83 ministers and vice ministers from 176 countries came together at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva on December 10–12, 2003, to express a common vision on the role of information-communications technologies (ICT) to achieve Information Societies. This is the first multi-stakeholder global effort to share and shape the use of ICT-based products, networks, services and applications to help countries overcome the digital divide and achieve solid economic advancement.

I-Ways is presenting excerpts from presentations by senior government leaders of 31 developing countries from all regions, following this summary of WSIS. These statements underscore their commitments to ICT as the driving force for achieving Information Societies.

WSIS delegates adopted a Declaration of Guiding Principles and Action Plan of concrete initiatives to advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. To access these texts go to: [http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_multi-en-1161|1160.asp](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi-en-1161|1160.asp). The Plan of Action is considered to be a platform to promote the Information Society at the national, regional and international levels. “All stakeholders have an important role to play in the Information Society, especially through partnerships:

- Governments have a leading role in developing and implementing comprehensive, forward looking and sustainable national e-strategies. The private sector and civil society, in dialogue with governments, have an important consultative role to plan in devising these e-strategies.
- The commitment of the private sector is important in developing and diffusing ICT for infrastructure, content and applications. The private sector is not only a market player but also has a role in a wider sustainable development context.

- The commitment and involvement of civil society is equally important in creating an equitable Information Society, and implementing ICT-related initiatives for development.
- International and regional institutions, including international financial institutions, have a key role integrating the use of ICTs in the development process and making available necessary resources for building the Information Society and for the evaluation of the progress made.”

WSIS was held under the auspices of the United Nations and the ITU. In an opening address, Secretary-General Kofi Annan told delegates “technology has given birth to the information age. Now it is up to all of us to build an information society from trade to telemedicine, from education to environmental protection, we have in our hands, on our desktops and in the skies above, the ability to improve standards of living for millions upon millions of people.”

The Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Yoshio Utsumi closed the event on an optimistic note of consensus and commitment, but cautioned this was only the start of a long and complex process. “Building the inclusive information society requires a multi-stakeholder approach. The challenges raised – in areas like Internet governance, access, investment, security, the development of applications, intellectual property rights and privacy – require a new commitment to work together if we are to realize the benefits of the information society.”

The three-day Summit is the first multi-stakeholder global effort to share and shape the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for a better world. The Summit also was groundbreaking in other ways too. It offered a genuine “venue of opportunity” in a unique meeting of leaders, policy-makers, ICT business people, voluntary and non-governmental organiza-

tions of every possible kind, and top-level thinkers and speakers. Alongside the three-days of Plenary meetings and high-level roundtables, nearly 300 side-events helped bring the dream of an inclusive information society one-step closer to becoming reality.

Partnership announcements included a US\$ 400,000 grant by the US Government for ICT development in low-income countries. CISCO and ITU also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to open 20 more Internet Training Centers in developing countries. As well, Hewlett-Packard will provide low-cost products that will help overcome the illiteracy barrier to ICT. Handwritten texts for example will be recognized for e-mail transmission. Microsoft, working with UNDP, will provide a billion dollar program over 5 years to bring ICT skills to underserved communities.

One innovative initiative announced to bridge the digital divide is the Bhutan E-Post project. For faster, cheaper and more reliable communication to remote, mountainous areas of Bhutan, the Government of India will deliver e-post services to the Bhutanese Postal Service via a US\$ 400,000 a V-satellite network and solar panels power system. The partners include ITU, Bhutan Telecom and Post, Worldspace and Encore India. And at the very close of the Summit, the cities of Geneva and Lyon and the Government of Senegal have announced contributions totaling about 1 million euros to fund information technology in developing countries. The contributions will represent the first three payments towards the Digital Solidarity Fund, the creation of which is to be considered by a UN working group for the Tunis phase.

The second phase of the Summit takes place in Tunis in 2005 and will measure ambitious goals set at this first event. The overarching goal of the Summit has been to gain the will and commitment of policy-makers to make ICTs a high priority, and to bring together public and private sector players to forge an inclusive dialogue based on the interests of all. In these two respects, the Summit has been heralded a success.

Top Summit targets remain to be achieved, including connecting all schools, villages, governments and hospitals, and bringing half the world's population within ICT reach, all by the year 2015. The Summit has clearly identified national e-strategies as the key vehicle to meet the targets. Connecting public places, revising school curricula, extending the reach of TV and radio broadcasting services and fostering rich multilingual content are all recognized as needing strong national-level governmental commitments.

To encourage and assist national and local governments in this work, the Summit also foresees the de-

velopment of international statistical indicators to provide yardsticks of progress; exchanges of experience to help develop "best practice" models, and the fostering of public-private partnerships internationally in the interests of sustainable ICT development.

Indeed, collaboration across the complex information society chain – from the scientists that create powerful ICT tools, to the governments that foster a culture of investment and rule of law, to the businesses that build infrastructure and supply services, to the media that create and disseminate content and – above all – human society which ultimately employs such tools and shapes their use, lays the foundation for an inclusive knowledge-based world on which the riches of an information society can flourish.

On the issue of financing for underserved economies, a task force will be established to undertake a review of existing ICT funding mechanisms and will also study the feasibility of an international voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund.

On the areas of intellectual property rights and the need for enabling environments, universal access policies, and multilingual, diverse and culturally appropriate content to speed ICT adoption and use – particularly in the world's most underserved economies – government-level commitment to follow a set of common values and principles has been attained.

Although these achievements fuel hope and may stoke further collaboration, Mr. Utsumi, together with many world leaders, appealed to all stakeholders to keep the spirit of cooperation alive well beyond the two years to Tunis, and to back up universally agreed principles with concrete actions to spark more peace and prosperity across the planet. "The realization of the Plan of Action is crucial to the long-term success of the Summit. We need imagination and creativity to develop projects and programs that can really make a difference. We need commitment – on the part of governments, the private sector and civil society – to realistic targets and concrete actions. We need the mobilization of resources and investment," he said. "With the unique occasion of a World Summit, we have the chance to scale up our ambitions to the global level, which is equal to the size of the challenge. Let us not miss this opportunity."

The complete text of the statements by Heads of State and other senior government leaders may be found at <http://www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/coverage/index.html>.

**JAMAICA**

*Phillip Paulwell, Minister of Science, Commerce and Technology*

We are committed to e-commerce and e government. As a result we have developed an electronic transactions policy and enabling legislation. We recognize that in order to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by Electronic Commerce, we must be prepared to do a number of things.

- First, we must be prepared to provide widespread access to information networks and services, since this is the fundamental infrastructure for full participation in the digital economy.
- Second, we must be prepared to open our economies to foreign investors and suppliers. This is critical towards participating in the global marketplace.
- Third and most important, we must be prepared to educate our people to become technologically adept, because without education there can be no innovation, and no growth.

For our part, the Government of Jamaica has taken the initiative to act, by making bold steps to establish the ICT sector as the very platform of modern economic development in the nation.

The government's objective is to ensure that Jamaica becomes an active player in the global information society. We believe that an appropriate ICT policy will generate new products; new production processes and new forms of organization and competitiveness, and its ultimate success will depend on human skills, extensive adaptability and the will to use new technology.

This policy emphasizes:

- Promoting partnerships and awareness between the state, civil society and private sectors;
- Increasing opportunities for access and connectivity to ICT infrastructure;
- Increasing the competence, skills and literacy level of the marginalized majority to allow for active participation in the emerging knowledge based society; and
- Promoting public access to government information – we have passed legislation to grant citizens access to documents previously in the public domain and archives. This legislation represents one example of the government of Jamaica's intention to create an enabling environment for transparency and good governance.

The ICT revolution and global developments in the telecommunications environment, dictated the end of the monopoly in our telecommunications industry. However, the commitment of the government to the promotion of the sector as a major engine of growth and development expedited the liberalization process.

Since the beginning of the liberalization process, we have experienced unparalleled growth in voice telephony rivaling any country in the world. Combining fixed line subscribers and mobile users there are almost 1.8 M telephone accounts. In a population of 2.6 M this achievement is phenomenal.

Today, the Government realizes that there must now be a shift in emphasis from voice telephony to the provision of data services coupled with a corresponding increase in high speed access to the Internet allowing for the delivery of broadband services.

In developed and developing countries alike, the use of information and communication technology in education has been gathering momentum. The technology has facilitated the development of virtual centers of learning and most universities now offer on-line courses.

Increasingly we must utilize information technology to promote distance teaching as an integral part of our education and training systems. This approach assumes great urgency given our resource constraints and the value of education to the process of national development.

As a small island developing state, we face our share of challenges, yet, we have risen to the task at hand, through, political will, stakeholder involvement, policy and legal reform and international and regional cooperation. While assessing our accomplishments, we are still very much aware that there is still much more to be done as a nation and as a region.

**BANGLADESH**

*Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister*

Information Technologies have generated profound changes in human society. These are quite different from social transformations caused by earlier scientific advances. The invention of the telegraph in the early 19th century started the modern Information Technology. By the 21st century we are witness to a dramatic new wave of IT, leading to massive socio-economic changes.

Information Technology has significant advantages over past industrial technologies. Its impact goes be-

yond the developed world and extends to developing countries as well. It has opened up vast new opportunities for them, unlike past technology.

Information Technology demands very modest investment. It does not degrade the environment. Information Technology requires only one ingredient to become productive, namely human intellect. The technology becomes cheaper as it develops itself. Also, while their cost declines progressively, their uses multiply at a faster rate. These fundamental differences have created conditions for us to leapfrog underdevelopment.

Bangladesh has placed poverty alleviation on the top of its development agenda. It is here that ICT has a critical role to play. It is for developing countries and especially the least developed among them to seize the opportunity and adopt ICT as a priority tool to fight hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, discrimination against women, children, aged and disabled. The need to invest in ICT infrastructure and especially ICT human resources is paramount.

I am happy that our national policy on ICT conforms closely with the outcomes of the documents we intend to endorse in Geneva. Our aim is to build an ICT driven nation comprising a knowledge-based society by the year 2006. We hope to establish a countrywide ICT infrastructure that will ensure access to information by all our citizens. This will both empower people and enhance democratic values. It will also facilitate sustainable economic development, governance, e-commerce, banking, public utility services and a variety of on-line ICT enabled services.

We live in an asymmetric world marked by wealth and poverty. The digital divide has widened the development gap. However, I believe that we have now devised a technology that can overcome these differences and lead to a global society with minimum poverty and maximum equity. We must, indeed, resolutely commit ourselves to build the Information Society and implement our Plan of Action.

In this regard, the need for both regional and international cooperation is vital. This is necessary to overcome financial obstacles that impede access to ICT. There is also a need for greater support and cooperation programs from International Financial Institutions. Impetus from this World Summit is, therefore, crucial.

I would like to strongly recommend that we create a Digital Solidarity Fund which would inter-alia:

- Channel technical and financial assistance towards national capacity building;
- Facilitate transfer and use of technology from developed countries;

- Assist sharing of knowledge and skills;
- Develop compatible regulations and standards that respect national characteristics and concerns, including spectrum management.

ICT offers a unique opportunity to attain human development and socio-economic targets set by the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It provides a chance for the poorer countries to narrow the gap with the developed world. We need to demonstrate our united resolve to take up this challenge. Above all, we need to demonstrate progress before we meet again in Tunis in 2005.

## CHINA

*Wang Xudong, Minister of Information Industry*

As a developing country, China attaches great importance to the information industry. It is implementing a leapfrog development strategy characterized by the mutual reinforcement of informatization and industrialization, which has yielded positive results. With an annual addition of over 90 million in recent years, China now has over 500 million telephone subscribers and more than 78 million Internet users. Electronic and information products manufacturing has become a fairly large industry. In China, hundreds of millions of households are using TVs, phones and the Internet, reaping more and more benefits from informatization. Information industry has developed into a leading, pillar and basic industry of China's national economy and is playing a significant role in the social and economic development.

We believe that the information society is the result of human civilization and progress. As such, it should be a people-centered, development-oriented and inclusive society, which benefits all peoples and countries. However, we should not fail, in the process of economic globalization and ICT development, to see the increasing disparity in wealth and the enlarging "digital divide" between the developed and developing countries, and the least developed countries facing the risk of "being marginalized" in the information area. The international community should get ready actively to meet this challenge. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my observations in this regard.

First, coordinated economic and social development is essential to building the information society. Without properly tackling the fundamental issue of devel-

opment, we'll get nowhere. In the first 20 years of this century, China will be devoted to building a well-off society in an all-around way which will benefit hundreds of millions of people, featuring a more developed economy, improved democracy, higher level of science and education, thriving culture, social harmony and a better-off life. China will also speed up rural economic development, continue to implement the strategy of developing its western part and revitalize the old industrial bases in its northeastern part and other areas so as to achieve balanced development between urban and rural areas as well as in different regions. In the information and communications field, China will go all out to enable more people to benefit from informatization and industrialization by improving the information infrastructure and the capability of the manufacturing sector, promoting the use of information technologies, developing communications in rural areas and providing universal service.

Second, a peaceful, stable, fair and reasonable international development environment is a must for building the information society. The international community should pay attention to the interests of the increasingly marginalized disadvantaged countries and groups, and lead the economic globalization towards a direction that enables all-win results and coexistence among different countries and groups. The developing countries should, through their own efforts, explore development modes of the information society that suit their own national conditions, and China will work unremittently toward this end. We call on the developed countries to fulfill their obligations to render active and effective help in providing capital, technologies and human resources to enable the developing countries to keep up with the pace of development of the global information and network. Governments, related international organizations, private sectors and civil societies should be encouraged to strengthen cooperation in building the information society and bridging the "digital divide". We appeal for more participation and coordination by inter-governmental organizations in such issues as internet-related public policies to create a favorable international environment for the development of the Internet.

Third, efforts should be made to build up a harmonious, inclusive and coexistent information society. While freedom of speech should be guaranteed and human dignity and rights safeguarded by law and system, social responsibilities and obligations should also be advocated. The international community should fully respect the differences in social systems and cultural

diversity. This is the basic norm for building the information society.

Fourth, an important guarantee for building the information society is to build more information networks and strengthen information security. Efforts should be made to strengthen infrastructure, promote the use of ICTs and aggressively develop the Internet. Measures should be taken to actively and effectively prevent the use of information technologies and resources for pornographic, violent and terrorist purposes as well as for criminal activities endangering national security so as to ensure the healthy development of information and networks.

## EGYPT

*Mohamed Hosny Mubarak, President*

The effects of ICT revolution should not be limited exclusively to achieving economic and developmental gains. It should be extended to strengthening political, social and cultural links among nations . . . to bringing about world peace based on justice, equality, and respect of international legitimacy . . . to supporting national efforts towards more freedom, democracy, and respect of human rights. All this should be achieved within a framework that respects national identity and maintains the diversification of particularities, religions, and cultures as key components for cooperation and integration among civilizations.

To deepen the concept of universality in information society, all peoples should have a chance to effectively take part in developing, manufacturing, and utilizing ICT which should become an effective instrument in exercising the right to development in its broader sense, in a manner that entrenches the principles of equality, justice, and active community participation.

This requires support, particularly to developing countries, through promoting their scientific and research capabilities, and in transferring needed technology and know-how.

Egypt has always played a major role in building regional support to the international efforts to establish the modern information society. We took the lead in proposing a common Arab strategy which reflects our vision of the Arab Information Society, and which was endorsed by the Arab Summit in Amman in 2001. Egypt has taken similar steps on the African level, which contributed to directing the work of the E-Africa Commission, established within the context of NEPAD and under the auspices of the African Union, towards achieving the same objective.

These efforts were crowned with our full-fledged involvement in regional efforts within the preparatory process for this Summit through hosting the high-level Pan-Arab Regional Conference on WSIS last June, to which our African brothers were also invited.

The Pan-Arab Conference has signaled an unprecedented interest in laying down the solid foundation for the contemporary information society, and in making the maximum use of the ICT revolution to bridge the digital divide. The main document adopted at that conference reflected our aspiration that this WSIS will give a strong push to our national and regional efforts in several areas, the most important of which are:

*First:* Deploying the necessary infrastructure, along with creating the mechanisms required to increase the penetration of communication and internet services, using newly-developed business models to reach everyone, everywhere, and at affordable cost.

*Second:* Developing our human resources through exploiting the high capabilities of ICT in education and training.

*Third:* Promoting the creation of electronic content and applications to serve economic and social development while encouraging innovation, and maximizing the role of the private sector in this regard.

*Fourth:* Encouraging governments to adopt necessary policies and legislations that enable the growth and flourishing of the information society, and foster partnerships among national and multinational businesses.

*Fifth:* Introducing innovative financing mechanisms that respond to developing countries' needs to bridge the digital divide including the adoption of debt reemployment policies in funding developmental projects.

In our persistent quest for entrenching the fundamentals of the contemporary Egyptian society, we launched an array of national initiatives to transform the Egyptian society into a knowledge-based society. Our leading initiatives include the use of ICT in upgrading education standards, improving health services, speeding our efforts towards E-government, and facilitating E-business transactions. Our efforts have been accelerated by the establishment of an evolving ICT industry as a catalyst in both the Arab and African regions.

For this purpose, Egypt has established the "smart village": a state-of-the-art high-tech business park that invites investors to benefit from an excellent support environment and special incentives in order to address a strong emerging local and regional market. Further-

more, Egypt has established a successful partnership among the government, the private sector, and the civil society in implementing a number of pioneer initiatives aiming at providing free Internet, availing a computer for every home at affordable prices, and establishing IT clubs nationwide. Our main objective behind all that remains to expand the base of popular benefit from ICT in all sectors.

All the above-mentioned objectives would not have come true without our vanguard efforts in the development of human resources, and in reinforcing awareness of the importance of ICT in modern societies. Egypt has now reached a standard that would qualify it to become a center of excellence in this field.

Hence, I call for the establishment of an equitable partnership between developing and developed nations, to utilize available resources and share success stories. I am convinced that the financial support through the newly-ushered mechanisms will ensure finding innovative ways to bridge the digital divide and construct the global information society that we look for.

## ESTONIA

*Arnold Rüütel, President*

Information Society development is the call of the day but also a global, national and individual challenge. In order to ensure economic growth, competitiveness and – most importantly – an increase in the quality of lives of our people – it is essential for governments to keep Information Society development constantly high on the agenda.

I am pleased that Estonia, being one of the smallest countries in Europe, has clearly defined this goal for itself as a priority. Consistency in policy and practice has ensured a strong move towards information society in Estonia. In relatively short time we have reached the forefront of advanced ICT usage.

How was such development possible for a country with limited resources? The answer is simple: creating an enabling environment, opening markets, including all stakeholders and prioritizing ICT in education have been the steps producing results. Perhaps the most important factor for ICT development has been the liberalization of the telecommunications market.

Developing of the enabling environment and fruitful cooperation with the third and private sectors has put in place ICT infrastructure, which provides access to Information Society services also for the people of Estonia who are not so affluent.

The use of IT has rendered the public sector more efficient. This has created possibilities to use more public funds for handling other important issues in society. In rebuilding our public sector we have strongly relied on the Internet. Today, most of the information in public and private sector is exchanged utilizing public Internet possibilities. In addition, ICT solutions have enabled us to increase democracy by increasing citizen participation in decision-making processes.

However, it is necessary to follow democratic principles and to ensure freedom of speech and free press. Definitely generally recognized principles of human dignity and protection of minors apply also to the new media.

In the summer of 2002, the Government of the Republic of Estonia, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Information Program of Open Society Institute (OSI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to set up an eGovernance Academy in Estonia.

The main purpose of the academy is to increase the level of information and communication technology coordination among the public sector leaders, specialists and third sector representatives of the former Soviet Union republics, Central and Eastern Europe, and Asian countries.

The training project combines the practical knowledge and experiences of the Estonian public sector, the know-how of the European Union experts, and the experiences of the target countries who participate in the training. So far the eGovernance Academy has successfully carried out training for the ICT senior officials of Kyrgystan, Sri Lanka, Albania, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan and many other countries. It is foreseen to provide training for altogether 400 people within three years.

We expect the training programs and knowledge sharing to be a significant contribution to the global process of Information Society development. Estonia's experience confirms that IT development and cohesive implementation is cost saving and effective for the society. And this approach is what we are willing to share with everybody in order to make a complimentary contribution to building Information Society.

## **ALGERIA**

*Amar Tou, Minister of Posts and Information and Communication Technologies*

In my country, despite the difficulties inherent in an economy in transition, despite the problems caused by natural disasters, we are continuing to make improvements in all fields, in particular that of education.

We therefore decided on an intensive input of ICTs into all levels of training, whether it be equipping 22,000 educational establishments with microcomputers or installing information networks inside and between universities and centers of vocational training.

As regards human development, this has received funding amounting to 6 per cent of GDP, particularly benefiting the Algerian university system, which is preparing facilities for more than one million students.

Our approach has always been to focus our attention on ordinary people. The aim of all our activities is to create wealth in order to improve their living conditions and enhance their well-being.

How should this aim be incorporated into the concept of the information society if not by providing the right of access to information networks and the right to communicate?

It should be emphasized that the development effort extended over the entire telecommunication infrastructure, with 15,000 kilometers of fiber-optic cables laid throughout the country since 2001 in order to provide high-speed multimedia communications.

Accordingly, since 1 November this year, ADSL broadband access has been operational in Algeria, providing the benefits of high-speed services.

This welcome progress is the result of combined efforts from the public and private sectors. This type of access, the cost of which has fallen significantly, will benefit business users and academics, as well as people surfing the Internet in several thousands of cybercafés throughout the country. All these efforts have resulted in the doubling of teledensity in two years.

Development and innovation are also playing their part in this economic revival process: the creation of a cyber-park in the new town of Sidi-Abdallah, west of Algiers is one of the concrete projects for that.

The cyber-park, covering about one hundred hectares, will leverage the development of ICTs through the Technobridge incubator and will be a true showcase for the new technologies.

The integration and participation of all in the building of the information society depends on mutual understanding and respect between cultures and languages in particular, since we believe that plurality and diversity remain one of the riches of human heritage and should therefore be at the heart of the building of the information society.

Since the free movement of information is an essential prerequisite in this process, it is clear that the media must play an active role in promoting various freedoms, in particular the freedom of expression, and strengthening democratic practice.

## UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan Address to WSIS

We are going through a historic transformation in the way we live, learn, work, communicate and do business. We must do so not passively, but as makers of our own destiny. Technology has produced the information age. Now it is up to all of us to build an information society. This Summit is unique. Where most global conferences focus on global threats, this one will consider how best to use a new global asset. We are all familiar with the extraordinary power of information and communications technologies. From trade to telemedicine, from education to environmental protection, we have in our hands, on our desktops and in the skies above, the ability to improve standards of living for millions upon millions of people. We have tools that can propel us toward the Millennium Development Goals; instruments with which to advance the cause of freedom and democracy; vehicles with which to propagate knowledge and mutual understanding. We have all of this potential. The challenge before this Summit is what to do with it. The so-called digital divide is actually several gaps in one. There is a technological divide – great gaps in infrastructure. There is a content divide. A lot of web-based information is simply not relevant to the real needs of people. And nearly 70 percent of the world's web sites are in English, at times crowding out local voices and views. There is a gender divide, with women and girls enjoying less access to information technology than men and boys. This can be true of rich and poor countries alike: some developing countries are among those offering the most digital opportunities for women, while some developed countries have done considerably less well. There is a commercial divide. E-commerce is linking some countries and companies ever more closely together. But others run the risk of further marginalization. Some experts describe the digital divide as one of the biggest non-tariff barriers to world trade. And there are obvious social, economic and other disparities and obstacles that affect a country's ability to take advantage of digital opportunities. We cannot assume that such gaps will disappear on their own, over time, as the diffusion of technology naturally spreads its wealth. An open, inclusive information society that benefits all people will not emerge without sustained commitment and investment. We look to you, the leaders assembled here, to produce those acts of political will. We also look to the business community, which I am glad to say is represented here in impressive numbers. The future of the IT industry lies not so much in the developed world, where markets are saturated, as in reaching the billions of people in the developing world who remain untouched by the information revolution. E-health, e-school and other applications can offer the new dynamic of growth for which the industry has been looking. We look to civil society groups, in particular for their rich knowledge of hopes and concerns at the local level, among communities that are eager to join in the global exchange of ideas and information, but may also feel their identities are threatened by a pre-packaged global culture. And we look to media organizations, which are both creators of content and essential watchdogs. At yesterday's World Electronic Media Forum, broadcasting leaders from all the world's regions adopted a declaration in which they pledged to do their part for development and social cohesion. It is vital that they retain their freedom to do so, as spelt out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, the right to freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental to development, democracy and peace, and must remain a touchstone for our work ahead. Information and communication technologies are not a panacea or magic formula. But they can improve the lives of everyone on this planet. Yet even as we talk about the power of technology, let us remember who is in charge. While technology shapes the future, it is people who shape technology, and decide what it can and should be used for. So let us embrace these new technologies. But let us recognize that we are embarked on an endeavor that transcends technology. Building an open, empowering information society is a social, economic and ultimately political challenge. There is no comparison between the technologies of the atomic age and those of the information age. Nonetheless, something written half a century ago by the American nuclear scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer seems strangely prescient and applicable today. And I quote: "The open society, the unrestricted access to knowledge, the unplanned and uninhibited association of men for its furtherance – these are what may make a vast, complex, ever growing, ever changing, ever more specialized and expert technological world, nevertheless a world of human community."

The Internet has become an indispensable tool of communication for both government and business, researchers and the general public. This is why the Internet environment and Internet security is of the greatest interest to us, as it is to all other States.

While recognizing that some of the concerns over management of this global network are of a technical nature, the fact remains that other types of concern are being raised. These are a matter for governments, which must establish mechanisms to enable a multilateral response. We are deeply involved in both the use and the development of the Internet.

We have staunchly supported efforts to promote the use and manufacture of generic medicines by developing countries, for reasons of survival. Similarly, while respecting the protection of intellectual and industrial property, we support access to open software, as a solution to the constantly increasing cost of software and as a means of preventing access being blocked to the sources of know-how and knowledge.

In the field of regional cooperation, together with our African counterparts, we are establishing mechanisms and funding for various projects under the NEPAD initiative, which has placed major emphasis on ICTs.



Our ambition is to transform Africa into a developed continent which will provide its children with proper conditions for their development and well-being, in particular as a result of its connectivity with all the countries of the world, and which will no longer be synonymous with economic and social underdevelopment, with famine and war. The African continent will then be able to extend a warm welcome to all investors, providing them with the conditions they need to get fully established.

## CUBA

*Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, President of the National Assembly*

These are not times for illusions nor to echo a rhetoric meaningless to the peoples of the world. To seriously speak of “the information society”, the conquest of a world free of hunger, ignorance, unhealthiness, discrimination and exclusion is a prerequisite. For this phrase to be more than a deceitful slogan it has to be placed in the context of true humanity and solidarity.

What does “the information society” mean for 75% of the population of the developing world? What is the use of new information and communication technologies for the 2.2 billion people living in extreme poverty, for the 843 million people living in hunger and for the 2,4 billion lacking in health services? What would the 854 million adults who do not know how to read or write, and the 115 million children without access to education do with a computer? How would it be used by the two billion people lacking electric energy.

Much has been achieved by humankind in the fields of science and technology since the beginning of history. The advances of the last century and their dynamics are impressive. But what is really amazing is the contrast between the material progress reserved for a few and the ever increasing backwardness in the development of humanism and solidarity.

The number of those who are not yet acquainted with the telephone is higher than the total of the world population when commercial telephone services were established. Those who barely survive today in the most abject poverty are much more numerous than those who inhabited the earth the day the United Nations was born with its unfulfilled promises of peace and freedom.

In 2001, the countries with the highest income concentrated 73% of Internet users and 95.5% of the computers connected to it. But, in addition, the “digital divide” creates new contrasts within countries, includ-

ing the richest ones, where those marginalized also abound. By 2002, it was estimated that only 2.4% of humankind acceded to Internet, while between 50 and 60% struggled against poverty.

Let this summit not be one more in the long list of meetings convened for the debate of vital issues, but without concrete results. Let it result, in essence, in the firm commitment to carry-out effective actions. Internet should not remain in the hands of the main owners of transnational capitals; it is imperative to create a democratic intergovernmental institution which regulates it and promotes international cooperation and the transfer of financial resources and technology. Let the Declaration and Plan of Action of this Summit serve as a means for halting the media manipulation, for upholding truth, for accepting cultural diversity and for ceasing to impose the patterns prevailing in the countries of the North to those of the South.

A new world order of information and communications is an unpostponable need, requiring, furthermore, the achievement of an international revolution in the field of education. It is possible to eradicate illiteracy and to extend education up to sixth grade throughout the world. The total expense for this achievement would amount to less than the 0.004% of the Gross Domestic Product of industrialized countries members of OECD in a single year.

## INDONESIA

*Syamsul Mu'arif, Minister for Communication and Information*

Concerned at the growing digital divide, Indonesia has been following closely the various steps taken by countries around the world in addressing the inevitable move towards an information-centered society. The Government of Indonesia trusts in the power of ICT to boost economic, social and cultural development in the attainment of sustainable development and believes it could also facilitate efforts to fight against poverty, promote equality and gender empowerment. On the downside however, there is lingering concern that ICT could still further marginalize the developing countries and thus continue to widen the gap between developed and developing countries, and between developing countries themselves. If the latter are not to be denied the attainment of the knowledge-based society to which they aspire, all governments must show the highest commitment and political will in addressing this important issue. Bridging this digital divide is therefore of crucial

importance both to us and to the international community. On this basis, immediate and concrete measures at all levels must imperatively be enacted to bridge the digital divide and develop digital opportunities, as well as making ICT an essential aspect of development in all sectors. These efforts should, however, respect the reality of cultural, linguistic, traditional, and religious diversity in such a way as to make ICT an instrument of dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

With Indonesia's assumption of the Presidency of ECOSOC in 2000 and with the realization that the lives of billions of people were still untouched by the digital revolution, a special effort was made to emphasize the importance of ICT at all levels. At the end of the ensuing discussions, Ministers adopted the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration which recognized the key role of partnership in advancing development and which called on the international community to cooperate towards creating digital opportunity for all. However, in order to do this, the industrialized countries must first agree to a transfer of technology, a concept which has yet to move beyond a set of hollow political promises and into effective implementation. In this task, our most striking problem is the lack of technological capacity.

Other challenges stand in our path towards this goal, notably the fact that developing countries have restricted access to technology owned by the developed countries. An example is the intellectual property rights which developed countries frequently use to protect this access. May we therefore urge that a harmonious balance be found between protection and access. Likewise, we must underscore the fact that narrowing the gap would best be accomplished by opening access to ICT to developing countries, and by making it affordable for them.

Connectivity is another element which is of paramount importance if the implementation of ICT is to become generalized. The latest technological advances have completely changed the face of global telecommunication, yet most of the countries in the region have not fully grasped the huge potential advantages which can be derived from a conducive ICT environment. We therefore have to establish an appropriate strategy in order that such an environment may be created and digital opportunity become available to all countries. Here again, at the risk of repeating myself – but this cannot be overemphasized – cooperation of the closest kind between all countries in the region will be necessary if optimal results are to be achieved in securing a truly enabling environment.

Infrastructure is another major challenge, which can only be addressed by taking into account a number

of aspects, most notably those relating to rural areas. Thus, the infrastructures that need to be built in such areas should feature technology which is applicable to and suitable with rural requirements. In order to do so, we must assess and raise the degree of ICT literacy within the population through the creation of appropriate infrastructures. In this regard, the deployment strategy concerning these infrastructures must be properly defined and such segments of the population as women, children, disabled people or other vulnerable groups are catered for and provided with infrastructures that are fit for them.

In the same vein, local content should be continually up-dated. Considering the diversity of our region, the development of content should be relevant and applicable to the conditions in different countries and their individual needs. We have to respect the norms and values of individual countries as well as their stage of development.

In a globalizing world, ICT, and more particularly the Internet, should be used to strengthen our cultural identity and to promote dialogue among civilizations in order to establish a mutual understanding leading to greater tolerance and solidarity. Having said this, the Internet may also be used irresponsibly for defamatory purposes or for the propagation of extreme religious and ideological views. Such a misuse could be extremely damaging to our values and norms.

Another key issue is that of financing. The success of the measures outlined above depend on the readiness of the developed countries and the international financial institutions to assist developing countries as well as on the true commitment of the international community to the fulfillment of the Millennium Declaration's stated principle whereby the benefits of ICT should be available to all.

The Government of Indonesia, for its part, continues to promote the necessary policies on technology development geared towards achieving an informed society. As a country with more than 17,000 islands, 210 million people and over 5000 cultures, Indonesia has nevertheless devised laws, programs and initiatives focused on these realities, while still promoting democracy, transparency and accountability. The government has recently passed the Law on the Press, the Law on Broadcasting, and is currently preparing a Law on Freedom of Information. In this context, we welcome the assistance extended to us by a number of countries to help us build up our infrastructures. We look forward to further cooperation, in particular with regard to our efforts to promote our own affordable technologies de-

signed to make the promotion of the information society in rural areas an integral part of the government's policies and strategies.

## **ETHIOPIA**

*Philippos W. Mariam, State Minister of Infrastructure*

As a developing country, Ethiopia would like to exploit every means and opportunity which would assist it in fighting against poverty as well as in its effort to ensure sustainable development. We are convinced that the emergence of a global information society is inevitable and believe that the Summits in Geneva as well as in Tunis will speed up this process. We do, therefore, share and fully support the basic considerations expressed in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action that there is a need for developing countries, particularly LDCs, to be equipped with:

- the necessary enabling environment,
- the relevant institutional and management capacity,
- internationally competitive telecommunications infrastructure and services,
- pervasive penetration of internet technology, skilled human resources, and
- streamlined ICT applications into development programs

so as to enable them to strategically intervene in speeding up the evolution of an information society. In this connection, developing a purposefully targeted financing mechanism to assist LDCs is decisive to make this global initiative a reality.

In Ethiopia our overall development strategy seeks to promote rapid, broad based and equitable growth by focusing on rural development where 85% of our population makes a living. The role of ICTs infrastructure cannot be overlooked in the process of implementing such a development strategy. Therefore, at present, Ethiopia is undertaking a program which aims primarily at fostering greater application of ICTs through capacity building to enhance public service delivery. The components of the program include, among others, satellite based ICTs application in secondary education across the country, interconnection of higher education entities and implementing district level connectivity to empower a decentralized development approach. In addition, this year, we have established a national Information and Communication Technology Development Authority to guide the synergetic and systematic exploitation of the ICT industry for the accelerated attainment of our social, economic and political development objectives.

## **ZAMBIA**

*Bates Namuyamba, Minister of Communications and Transport*

Unfortunately, communication infrastructures in sub-Saharan Africa are among the least developed in the world. Teledensity in the region is among the lowest in the world. This great disparity is perpetuating the imbalance in economic activity between Africa and the rest of the world.

My government is committed to the improvement of the quality of life of our citizens and economic strength of our society and to the achievement of an equitable and peaceful global community.

It therefore calls for particular attention to the identification of possible mechanisms for the realization of the resolutions of this summit, including that of the digital solidarity fund. We therefore wish to associate with others whose goals are to transform the digital divide into digital opportunity.

We too are very concerned about ever increasing inequalities in infrastructure development and in the access to and use of technologies and urge the international community to help Zambia and other developing countries to build their capacity in narrowing this gap.

We urge the summit to support regional initiatives such as the new partnership for African development (NEPAD), which is a vehicle for development in Africa.

My government is in the process of finalizing the national ICT policy, which will enable us reassess our development priorities in order to make the necessary investments in building a knowledge society.

I am confident that Zambia and other countries attending this world summit will abide by the commitment they have made so far in bridging the digital divide, and make wider efforts to build an inclusive global information society a success. We believe that these are critical steps in narrowing the digital divide.

## **BULGARIA**

*Igor Damianov, Minister of Education and Science*

At the beginning of the new Millennium we witness an unprecedented process of transition from industrial to information society with the three sectors of telecommunications, information technologies and media functioning in ever-closer synergy. This enables the development of new products and services, but also has an enormous impact on various aspects of social

life, such as education, health, media, public services and commerce. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been rapidly changing contemporary society and community life. On the other hand the majority of the world's population has no access to ICTs and the benefits of the Information Society.

The developing countries have marked a significant progress in building their information infrastructure during the 90-ies. However, there is still a substantial difference between the developed and the developing countries. While the gap in fixed and mobile communications has narrowed, the 'digital divide' in the construction of highway networks and providing electronic services to citizens and businesses grows wider both between the different countries and between the urban and the rural areas.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are among the major priorities of the Bulgarian Government. We consider providing access to information society services to all strata of the population, construction of high-speed information infrastructure and support of innovative products and services as the foundation of knowledge-based economy that fosters economic development and improves people's lives. Our program is based on the understanding that the information infrastructure links the country to the global economy and ensures its competitiveness.

The success of the Bulgarian government policy in the field of telecommunications and information technologies is demonstrated by the remarkable 35% growth of the ICT sector during the last two years, the 4% increase of Internet users during the first four months of 2002, as well as the doubling of mobile phone users to over 3,000,000, which would be a good basis for the introduction of mobile communications of third generation. Bulgaria ranks eighth in the world by the number of IT certificates per capita. Over 90% of the governmental institutions have web sites with interactive access. I would like to point out that this success was achieved primarily through the experience and professional skills of the IT experts in Bulgaria. Let me also add that my country plays an important international role in coordinating the Working Group on the use of electronic means for the implementation of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice on Environment (Aarhus Convention).

## **INDIA**

*Arun Shourie, Minister of Information Technology, Communications, and Privatization*

As a country that has secured many gains from Information Technology – India earns around \$11 billion from the export of IT services and products every year; as a country that has contributed significantly to the growth of this field – one-third of the start-ups in Silicon Valley were by Indians; as a country that is one of the principal knowledge-generators in this field – over 100 of the Fortune-500 companies have set up R&D centers in India; as the country that today has three-fourths of the world's CMM Quality level V companies; as a country that is expanding the infrastructure for an Information Society rapidly – we are adding 1.3 million subscribers to mobile telephony every month, we have already laid out 500,000 kilometers of fiber optic network; India will participate vigorously in the work program that you are adopting.

You are instituting a Working Group to ascertain the feasibility and effectiveness of setting up a Fund for advancing Information Society. Should such a Fund be set up, India will contribute financially in accordance with the formula that collective deliberations yield. To be of even greater assistance, we will contribute in kind – by training and equipping people for this new society, by sharing the substantial experience that we have acquired in spheres such as eGovernance, Telemedicine, imparting literacy, Information Security, language technologies. Indian firms today equip people in over 55 countries for the Information Society. Our Government is itself setting set up Cyber cities and training centers in other countries. I am delighted to report that just day before yesterday the Prime Minister of India and the President of Ghana opened the Kofi Annan Center for Excellence that India has established in Accra for West Africa. Friends, the inauguration itself was a token of a new world – the Indian Prime Minister was in Delhi, the President in Accra; they inaugurated the Center via a video teleconference! We will redouble such initiatives.

## *Freedom*

In India we value freedom for itself – in regard to the subject of your deliberations, Knowledge and Information Societies, we believe that they are predicated on creativity, and it is in freedom that creativity flourishes best. For the same reason, we are deeply committed to freedom of speech: on the rarest of rare occasions when a hand has been raised to curtail it, the people

have signed that hand. Moreover, we recognize that the right to information is the foundation of freedom to speak one's mind.

#### *Internet Governance*

You are requesting the Secretary General to set up a Working Group to think through issues concerning Internet Governance. India has considerable experience in this regard, and we will contribute in whatever way the Secretary General deems appropriate. I have two suggestions. In going through the deliberations that you have held on this matter, I feel that, the preliminary technical points having been discussed at length, we should now look farther afield. Consider just one example. As we modernize, our economies, our financial systems, our power grids, our rail and air traffic control systems get progressively integrated. A vast literature is already available – it is available on the Internet itself! – on how Information Technology can – and should! – be used to disrupt such progressively integrating systems. All of us together have to devise ways to prevent terrorists and other adversaries from doing so. I am, therefore, confident that the Working Group will examine the issue more comprehensively than has been possible in the run-up to this Summit.

I would also urge that even as the Group examines issues relating to Internet Governance, it scout for impedances that are created in fact. This will ensure that the next time we deliberate on the matter we are dealing with actual misuse of servers and the like rather than warding off miasmas and hypothetical possibilities.

Therefore, we should, through the new technologies, address specific, and urgent needs of our people.

- There are many fancy applications for eGovernance, for instance. In India a few hundred applications have been developed and adopted. But the one that has brought immediate, tangible benefit to ordinary farmers is that in some states all land records have been digitized – so that the farmer can secure title documents etc. without having to wait upon the village official.
- Similarly, by installing telemedicine infrastructure and software, we have enabled patients in distant, isolated communities to receive the best medical diagnosis and advice in the foremost of our hospitals.
- Eighteen languages are recognized as official languages under our Constitution. To enable people to access these new technologies, software has

been developed that transforms text – and will soon convert speech – automatically from one language to another.

- The script of Indian languages is phonetic. That of English is not. Therefore, software has been developed by which, while I type on a standard English keyboard, the computer transcribes and prints the text in the script of the Indian language.
- Many of us cannot read print – either because we are visually impaired or because we are illiterate. We have therefore developed software that transforms text into speech. This has already been done for anything available in electronic form – for instance, a person who is blind can by just a click or two get to his favorite newspaper on the Internet. And the computer reads out the paper to him.

I could readily give scores of examples of this kind. My suggestion is that even as, and specially because the new technologies make so many things seem attractive, we should sharpen our focus, and concentrate efforts on those projects that will spell immediate benefits to vast numbers, and which will lift them into this new Information Society.

#### *Six areas for focused effort*

Permit me, to suggest six areas concentration on which will yield immediate benefits:

- Abolishing illiteracy;
- Upgrading existing educational institutions – for instance, engineering and medical colleges – by connecting them with the best institutions in the country or region so that students in the less advantaged ones can share the teaching material, the lectures etc. of the best;
- Distant diagnosis and prescription of those who are not well;
- Enabling the disabled – specially the print disabled;
- Codifying traditional knowledge – for instance, household, indigenous remedies for common ailments.

In the coming months we should adopt a few specific projects of global reach and global significance, and organize coordinated research on them. Of the many projects that occur to me, I commend four for your consideration:

- Use ICT to abolish illiteracy;

- Develop the Universal Networking Language – so that a person in India can put his data or message on to the Net in any of our 18 languages, the machine should translate it into the Universal Networking Language, and my friend in Iran should be able to receive it in Persian;
- Bring text-to-voice and voice-to-text software to perfection so that worlds from which they are today shut out are opened to the print disabled;
- Today one of the severest impediments to enabling people to avail the benefits of the Information Society is the expense of laying the infrastructure to their doorstep; we should complete research that would enable wireless signals to go to a multiple of the 50/60 kilometers they traverse at present.

Each of these is a do-able task. Each of these will spell untold benefit to millions. Together, they are worthy of a gathering as exalted as this one. We should join hands so that they are accomplished – before we meet in Tunis.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

*Ilham Aliyev, President*

During the last decade, Information and Communication Technologies have become an integral part of our daily life. It is difficult even to imagine today's world without the Internet, without e-mail, and many other features of the global cyberspace. Today we are talking about new type of society – Information Society, new style of governance – e-Governance.

Decisions of this Summit to the large extent refer to young generation, since they are expected to create new realities of the information society. With this respect Summit documents will be of a great importance to Azerbaijan, with 70% of its population under age of 35. The young generation of Azerbaijan is actively involved in a number of ICT projects implemented jointly with the UNDP.

On behalf of the Government of Azerbaijan, I would like to stress that building the Information Society is fully in line with our principles and therefore we re-confirm our commitment to this idea. We are currently developing the State Program "E-Azerbaijan", including a number of projects ranging from e-Governance to e-Economy.

Economic and political stability which exists in Azerbaijan for more than 10 years is one of the major reasons of rapid development. The policy of economic and political reforms, aimed at integration into inter-

national community resulted in rapid economic growth and further democratization of our society. Annual GDP growth is around 10% for the last 6 years. Private sector share in GDP is more than 70%. Azerbaijan for many years holds one of the leading places among former republics of the Soviet Union and countries of Central Europe in the amount of foreign investments per capita.

Geopolitical situation of Azerbaijan makes our country a crossroad in regional transportation projects. Azerbaijan's role in East-West and North-South transport corridors is important. Transport and energy resources flows are always accompanied by information flows. Necessity of their processing and transformation into product are challenges we are facing in the field of information and communication technologies.

We believe that our country is capable to act as a system integrator in the regional ICT development, and ICT for Development in particular. This is a proposal we would like to make to all parties concerned.

Azerbaijan not only participates, but plays crucial role in all the regional projects. Azerbaijan's participation in the regional cooperation will continue.

Serious attention is paid in Azerbaijan to the creation and development of information and knowledge market, IT-infrastructure and IT-services. Scientific potential, technological achievements of Azerbaijan are sufficient for the creation of a knowledge-based society.

The State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan created to protect and properly manage oil revenues, help to diversify economy, accumulate assets for future generations is a completely transparent, internationally audited structure. This fund will help us to achieve our main objective – to transfer our black gold – oil resources into the human gold – a real welfare of every citizen of our country.

## **GHANA**

*Albert Kan-Dapaah, Minister of Communications and Technology*

I address myself to what Ghana sees as key areas in the initial stages of developing the Information society. First, we believe in the universal inclusive access by all to the Information society. The current state of communication infrastructure in our country requires that a major facelift is undertaken to promote nondiscriminatory modern high speed communications backbone that would facilitate the transportation of traffic from one point to another. Public/private partnership is being urgently solicited in the development of the backbone.

This is an area where we invite the private sector to complement our efforts in developing a universal access infrastructure backbone. Fortunately, Ghana is linked to the SAT-3 Submarine Cable linking Asia and Europe to Africa. This facility provides Ghana with an opportunity to facilitate the extension of its fiber-optic network now developed only within a small section of the southern sector of the country to link all corners of the country.

Undoubtedly, this calls for heavy capital investment and I am privileged to use this occasion to invite the private sector to support the development of this infrastructural backbone through our joint efforts.

Reaping the full benefits of the Information Society requires an enabling and transparent policy, legal and regulatory environment. We believe we have created such an environment. Ghana enjoys stable democracy with respect to rule of law. The combination of these two should assure investors of our readiness to welcome them in ICT development.

To further assure the investor world of our potential to develop using ICT as a tool the country has gone through an ICT formulation process to propel her socio-economic development programs. Investors can have access to the policy document, which has identified fourteen pillars to support our socioeconomic development including Health, Education, good Governance and Commerce.

Again I can assure investors through this medium that Ghana has a telecom environment to promote a fair and competitive telecom environment. The private sector is invited to take advantage to invest in our telecom sector particularly to extend connectivity to the rural and underserved parts of the country.

The enabling regulatory environment offers the investing public another good opportunity to locate in Ghana to undertake business process ventures such as Call Centers, Billing Centers etc. Ghana has an efficient workforce to support such ventures as far as human capacity is concerned. We graduate about 20,000 students from our 28 Tertiary Institutions in Ghana.

## **CROATIA**

*Stjepan Mesić, President*

I am proud to point out that the development of wireless technology, the technology underpinning the information society, originated from the invention of the radio set, attributed to the great scientist Nikola Tesla, whose home country was Croatia. The vision of com-

prehensive global connectivity he had at the beginning of the 20th century is now taking shape and is in full swing.

Croatia recognizes the importance and timeliness of this conference and, drawing on its own experience, wishes to make a contribution to the shaping of the information society. Our experience demonstrates how essential the exchange of quality information is for development, both at the level of local communities and at the macro level of state governance. We are aware that we live in an information society, having information as the main objective, but also as a means of development. Therefore, those who control the information have a distinct advantage, and the battle for one's cause, i.e. the battle for hearts and minds is increasingly fought with information.

Allow me to focus your attention on the economic benefits of embracing the information society, offering great possibilities for less developed countries. Only by investing in information resources can developing countries catch up with the developed world, which is in itself a wonderful opportunity to narrow the gap between the developing and the developed countries.

At the international level it is essential for lesser-developed countries to mobilize the necessary means to become integrated into the information society. A redistribution of global resources is therefore needed to avoid the danger of limiting the actual spread of the information society only to the developed world.

However, at a time when technology is developing faster than the underlying social infrastructure – legal, political or defense, and when its penetration is unstoppable, governments must ensure that it spreads in an even and standardized fashion. We are aware that the global information society helps to promote human rights and liberties. However, it also carries an inherent threat to the fulfillment of those rights and liberties. With computerization individual privacy has come under more threat than ever.

That is why states and the international community must play a role not only in fostering the development of the information society but also in incorporating clear mechanisms for the protection of human rights and liberties as well as the protection of privacy and intellectual property.

Striking a balance between the protection of the right to privacy and intellectual property on the one hand and the accessibility and free flow of information on the other is essential. Furthermore, states and the international community must devise and harmonize legal regulations providing for the protection of the indi-

## ITU Secretary General Yoshio Utsumi Address at WSIS

It gives me great satisfaction to tell you today that we have had unprecedented growth and expansion, as never before, despite the economical downturn. In 1999, there were around 1.5 billion telephone lines, today there are nearly 2.5 billion lines. In the last four years we have added 1 billion lines to the 1.5 billion we had connected in all the years before. This is a remarkable achievement, especially as more than a 75% were installed in the developing world.

ITU is making untiring efforts to bring the benefits of ICT to every strata of the global community. Today, the ITU is proud to be the lead agency organizing WSIS on behalf of the UN system. The resolution adopted by the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 1998 proposing the idea of this Summit, recognized that the information society touches on the work of many UN agencies. For that reason, I proposed to establish a High-Level Summit Organization Committee composed of interested UN agencies, to oversee the Summit process. I have had the privilege to chair that Committee.

Regional WSIS meetings took place in many parts of the world and tens of thousands of delegates have met to debate the issues.

I thank the governments of Mali, Romania, Japan, Russian, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Egypt and Lithuania for hosting those meetings. Our sister international organizations have also been active in the preparations. Although there is not sufficient time to mention all of them, I would particularly like to thank UNESCO, ILO, UNOG and ITU for providing their facilities during the PrepCom process, WMO, UPU UNESCO, UNITAR and UNDP as well as ITU for financial and human resources.

The transformation to the Information Society will be every bit as profound as the movement from agrarian to industrial societies. In the past, such changes have led to winners and losers. Some countries have prospered, while others have fallen behind. It could happen once again and, if we do not take any action now, existing gaps may be widened.

We must not make the same mistakes. By taking the right decisions, we must shape the direction of the Information Society and create a more just, prosperous and peaceful world. The cornerstone of any project today, be it AIDs eradication or poverty alleviation, is reliable effective communications. Connectivity has the power to bind the global community into a cohesive fraternity, which shares the common ideals of peace and tolerance, growth and development. A concerted global effort must be made to ensure that there is no gap between the rich and the poor when it comes to flow of and access to information.

Hence, I call upon the political leaders to exert their will, the captains of industry to show their business acumen, the NGO and civil society to provide the zeal, in order to forge a unity of purpose, a unison in the vision of universal access.

vidual against any abuses of information, and prevent the spread of unacceptable contents including racism and hate language. Governments and the international community should also make sure that the public sector, unappealing in terms of profit-making, is not left behind in the development of the information society.

Croatia has become involved in recent thinking on this issue and has put forward three projects, of particular interest for smaller countries. These are:

- speech recognition and synthesis for languages of small countries
- access to the benefits of the information society to citizens with special needs and
- a blueprint for an information society development strategy for smaller countries

The core issue and, I believe, the goal we wish to reach in the shortest time possible is making the information society accessible to all, everywhere and under the same terms, turning it from a global into a universal phenomenon.

## PHILIPPINES

*Virgilio Peña, Undersecretary of Information and Communication Technology*

ICT development is a priority of the Government of the Philippines. We acknowledge that technology is

one of the foundation of a sustainable economic development and that the continued progress of human development depends on a shared abundance resulting from the universal benefit of an Information Society.

The Philippines fully adheres to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration to “fully exploit all the new opportunities provided by ICT and of its combination with traditional media” to fight poverty and gender inequalities. By empowering people, we involve everyone in decisions regarding the development, deployment and use of ICT. The magnitude of the challenge posed by ICT, makes it more important to keep our focus on people – on their basic needs to alleviate their state of being; to enjoy all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the obligations and responsibilities we bear for each other.

The Philippines supports a global Declaration of Principles which adheres to a common goal of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society where all can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, especially our women and the youth, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner.

Today, we live in an era of new forms of solidarity by governments and all other stakeholders to form the



landscape of the way we conduct business and plot our collective futures. We acknowledge the need to create an enabling environment where all can play a role and perform their responsibility in the development of the Information Society. Our delegation reflects this multi-sectoral participation from private industry and civil society comprising of the youth, women and media.

The Philippines is resolute in its commitment to empower its poor, particularly those in rural and marginalized areas to enable them to use ICT as a tool to support their effort to lift themselves out of poverty. The Philippines is undertaking the building of Community e-Centers, a common platform for e-Government, distance education, health and other social services. It will be community based with content addressing their specific needs and relies heavily on private sector and local community participation for sustainability.

We recognize the need to achieve universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services. We are fully supportive of new international approaches and mechanism, including financial and technical assistance to contribute to bridge the digital divide, promote access to ICT, create digital opportunities and benefit from the potentials offered by ICT for development.

We recognize that a well developed ICT infrastructure built on a trust framework is an essential foundation for a people-centered Information Society. Inherent in this is a culture of cyber security for the protection of individual privacy and human rights.

Our country commits to a Global Action Plan that will be an evolving platform to promote the Information Society at all levels. Towards this end, we look to a real funding mechanism for the realization of a digital solidarity agenda for development.

Finally, we believe that beyond an Information Society, we should move towards a Knowledge Society. Too often we focus on technological innovation alone without capturing the dynamism and complexity of the challenges we face. The task at hand is not only to provide hardware and deploy broadband but more to give attention to human and social systems; address issues of content, language, education, literacy and community and social services in order for technology to make a difference.

## **UZBEKISTAN**

*Abdulla Aripov, Deputy Prime Minister*

Today in Uzbekistan, as in other countries proclaimed informatization as one of primary directions

of their policy, awareness of benefits brought by information and communication technologies development and deployment has been increasing. Development of information and communication technologies has become a major component of economics of Uzbekistan. Long-term strategy is also oriented to building of information society.

Basic aspects of the national strategy and actions plan in ICT area are defined in the speech of the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov on the session of the Parliament in May 2001 as well as in the Decree "On further development of computerization and introduction of information and communication technologies".

First-priority tasks of information and communication technologies development and deployment are the following:

- development of information resources and services market, gradual transition towards electronic forms of information exchange;
- wide introduction of information technologies into branches of real economy, creation of conditions for wide access of various levels of population to modern computer and information systems;
- introduction of progressive teaching systems into education process, based upon acquirement of and active utilization of modern computer and information technologies;
- accelerated development of technical infrastructure of ICT throughout the country taking into account convergence of information and communication networks and services;
- implementation of high-speed access to national and international information networks, and providing access to them for settlements including the rural ones.

The higher interagency authority in charge of coordination of computerization and ICT development is Coordination Council for Development of Computerization and ICT.

Uzbekistan supports creation of information society, which would provide observance and protection of national sovereignty, religious, cultural, social, and linguistic interests of all countries and peoples without any discrimination.

Uzbekistan declares its aspiration for and readiness to participate in building of information society oriented to people's interests and where each person with no regard to country of residence is given right to search, receive, and disseminate any information.

We agree that to solve these tasks all interested parties have to work for widening of access to informa-

tion and communication technologies as well as information and knowledge, to strengthen confidence and security while using ICT, create enabling environment, develop ICT applications, and expand their utilization areas and encourage cultural diversity.

## **CAMBODIA**

*Lar Narath, Undersecretary of State for Posts and Telecommunications*

At present, Cambodia's telecommunication is characterized by very small fixed networks and relatively large mobile networks. There are about 35,000 fixed subscribers being provided by three operators, the government operator is the major one, and about 350,000 mobiles being provided by 4 private operators. In IT there are 4 operating Internet service providers and two more are licensed to operate but have not yet started. In total there are about 10,000 Internet subscribers of which about 100 are of broadband type. The technologies used are the normal dial-up, DSL, wireless broadband and satellite terminals.

For the PSTN and IT networks we are grateful to a number of friendly countries, namely Japan, France, Germany and Korea for providing us grant aids from which we have a number of modern telecom switches, copper networks in the capital Phnom Penh, a long distance fiber optic network from East to West across the country and an E-Government network.

In addition to the grant aid for the physical networks Cambodia has also obtained technical assistance from the ITU, KfW (of Germany), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for a number of studies and advice. As a result we have now produced a final draft telecom law. The law complies with the basic requirements of the WTO of which Cambodia has just become a member.

The challenge we are facing now is how to make the telecom and IT services available to the remote and rural places. We are likely to see the use of a mixture of technologies, namely fiber optic, microwave and satellite. In this respect we are currently trying to promote a USO scheme where telecom operators will be requested to bid for the lowest subsidy in extending telecommunication service to pre-defined less profitable areas. The source of the subsidy fund for the USO is yet to be identified. Knowing that the funds available from the licensing fees of the existing telecom operators are being used for other sectors like health, education etc and etc the funds for the telecom USO

scheme will have to be found from other sources. We are hopeful that grant aids and assistance from friendly and wealthier countries will be forthcoming especially when we have a transparent and reliable USO scheme put in place. We have to be working hard on that.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the economic and social situations in Cambodia have improved relatively significantly due partly to the availability of telecom and IT infrastructures and services. Telecom and IT surely play a significant role in the growth and sustainability of the economic and social well-being of the country. The improvement of the telecom and IT sector in Cambodia could have been quite a lot better had we implemented the right approach from the early stage. Now continuing effort is being put on the improvement of the regulatory structure of the sector. A USO scheme is being devised and hopefully the services will be available in most, if not all, parts of the country. With the transparent and reliable USO scheme we are hopeful that more assistance will be accorded by the friendly and wealthier countries.

## **DPR KOREA**

*Kim Yong Dae, Vice-President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly*

Today, the rapid development of information and communication technologies have an immense impact on all aspects of social life to a great extent and, in particular, play a decisive role in accelerating the process of sustainable development. Thus providing the humankind with more favorable living environment than ever before.

To our regret, however, the overwhelming majority of the world population are not benefiting from the development of information and communication technologies and the digital divide between the developed and developing countries is further widening the already existing disparities between the rich and poor in the world. Particularly, imbalance in the network of information and communication and false information of all kinds in the cyber space are destroying the diversity of language and culture, the common heritage of humankind, and bringing about conflict among civilizations and cultures. Worse still, they even cause horrendous crimes.

Due to these negative impacts, we are now facing grave challenges in our efforts to achieve the intellectual development of humankind and the harmony among peoples of the world.

It is our common task to build the information society in conformity with the requirement of the information age continuously advancing in the new century.

Our delegation considers that the knowledge-based information society for all should be the one in which all the people enjoy the benefit of the information and communication technologies and participate actively in all fields of social life independently and creatively by enhancing their intellectual capacity.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is consistently maintaining the policy of attaching importance to science and technology, regarding them as the foundation of national power and the driving force for national prosperity. Pursuant to the idea of the great leader General Kim Jong Il attaching importance to science and information industry, the Government of our Republic is directing state investment and efforts to information industry in order to accelerate the building of a powerful and prosperous country by relying on information and communication technologies and provide the people with more civilized and affluent life than now. With a view to developing software technology, the core of information technologies, steps are also being taken to enable as many people as possible to possess information and communication technologies while continuously expanding and strengthening the institutions and organs specializing in software development and training computer experts.

The Government of the DPRK will continue to strive for the development of information industry of the country as required by the information age, thus actively contributing to the international efforts for the building of the information society.

## **LESOTHO**

*King Letsie III*

Lesotho, like most developing countries of the world, is still at an infancy stage of the information and communication technology (ICT). The widening digital divide between the north and the south remains a matter of grave concern to us. It is my government's humble submission that the quest for an information society should be pursued as a global initiative if mankind as whole, is to reap the full benefits thereof.

Connectivity in the case of Lesotho, with its unique mountainous landscape coupled with a small population and an equally small economic base, poses unenviable challenges. Driving a universal access strategy in this environment, calls for a parallel development of

support infrastructure such as electricity to reach the rural areas in order to register a noticeable improvement to the connectivity problem that plague Lesotho and the developing world alike.

Low ICT skills and awareness in general, among our communities, hinder progress in the proliferation of the ICT sector. Capacity building through transfer of skills and overall human resource development would greatly assist in addressing these challenges.

## **MYANMAR**

*U Mya Than, Permanent Representative to the United Nations*

Allow me to apprise this august assembly briefly of the Myanmar Government's endeavors to develop ICTs in the country. Realizing the potentials and the importance of the ICTs for the economic development of the country, the Government of the Union of Myanmar has established the ICT Development Council, chaired by the Prime Minister himself. The focal point of the Council is the e-National Task Force, chaired by the Minister for Telecommunications, Posts and Telegraphs. Six working committees on legal infrastructure, information infrastructure, ICT education, e-applications, ICT standardization, and services and investment, respectively, have also been constituted under the Task Force. The legal framework and related measures being put in place in Myanmar include, among other things, the Myanmar Computer Science Development Act of 30 September 1996, and other laws, rules and regulations. With regard to the ICT infrastructure, the measures to improve the domestic and international links, broadband access and Internet access are being taken. The measures taken with regard to ICT education include, among other things, the establishment of the computer universities and colleges and the e-learning centers and the implementation of various human resources development programs.

The "information society" is both an ongoing process and an aspiration. How we shall put ICT potentials to good uses for the benefit of mankind; how we shall tackle and overcome the challenges and problems; and implement our future plan of action; and how we shall actually shape this information society depend on all of us.

## e-Government Winners at the World Summit Awards

The World Summit Award (WSA) is a three-year global project, which is being held in the framework of and in cooperation with the WSIS 2003-2005. It involves representatives from numerous countries on each continent and sees the bridging of the digital divide and narrowing of the content gap as its overall goal. This is the first attempt within the global information society to evaluate and honor the best multimedia realizations from all over the world. ([www.wsis-award.org](http://www.wsis-award.org)) The award tries to evaluate first and foremost the content of the product. Awards were presented for e-Learning, e-Culture, e-Science, e-Government, e-Health, e-Business, e-Entertainment, e-Inclusion. The 2003 winners of the WSA E-Government Best Content were:

*Qatar e-Government Project*

This project provides comprehensive online services to its citizens, residents and business sector as well as potential tourists to Qatar. The mission is realized in an exemplary way and the service offers information, transaction and knowledge anytime anywhere on a single government-wide portal. Users can access everything from Visit Visa Services, Driving License and Traffic Violations, or pay Water & Electricity bill and their taxes. <http://www.e.gov.qa>

*Romanian e-Government Gateway*

This is the easy to use central access point to online public information and e-services. It facilitates a wide range of electronic transactions between citizens, businesses and public administration. Its single user authentication for various departments adds real value. The initiative reduces bureaucracy and reinforces the commitment to an accountable public sector in an outstanding way as part of the Romanian Government Strategy for transparency and efficiency. <http://www.e-guvernare.ro>

*Brazil Secretariat of Federal Revenues Website*

Why do Brazilian's experience with tax returns and tax payments differ from most others in the world? Receitanet, the site of the Federal Revenue and Custom Secretariat of Brazil (SRF) serves them best. SRF is using the Internet as an instrument of integration between tax authorities and taxpayers since 1997. With respectable results, 90% of all taxpayers used the Receitanet services for generating and submitting their tax returns. The system efficiently cuts organizational efforts and saves time and hassle for citizens. <http://www.receita.fazenda.gov.br>

*Bahrain Ministry of Commerce*

The Ministry of Commerce for Bahrain is the gateway to incoming business for the country and it has established an "e-Service gateway" addressing the private sector. The portal is not just a government site offering comprehensive e-services to the business community, but also an information service that delivers business news and reports, polls and newsletters. It promotes interaction between business communities and thus makes the site the key portal for all business in Bahrain. <http://www.commerce.gov.bh>

*Chile Easy Procedures*

Chile is not the only country where official procedures of the state bureaucracy turns out to be complicated and lengthy. But "Easy Procedures" is now setting new standards in facilitating and optimizing the relations of citizens and public institutions in Chile. The inclusive e-Government service provides all the relevant information, forms and online procedures at one central website thus saving time and resources of people and institutions. "Easy Procedures" serves all Chileans including citizens living abroad. <http://www.tramitefacil.cl>

The WSA 03 winners will be showcased around the world in special events during 2004. The events will demonstrate the world's best in quality e-content and will create awareness for the WSA 05 contest.

**MONGOLIA***Sanjbeegz Tumur-Ochir, Speaker of the Parliament*

Today, virtually every country has already designated the knowledge-based economic and social development as the priority goal for progress. In many countries ICT is increasingly becoming means of fundamental importance to provide government and business services to its citizens. Hence, Mongolia believes that the main purpose of the World Summit on Information Society lays not only in giving added impetus to governments' efforts that have already gained an increasing momentum, but also in drawing the attention of the international community to the widening digital divide among regions and countries, supporting developing countries, particularly their civil society and private sector in using ICTs as an engine of growth and development.

Mongolia has been establishing the fundamentals of the Information Society for a quite some time. The national development strategy envisages ICT as a priority goal and a leading factor for the social and economic progress of the country. Within this framework, measures are taken to improve the legal environment, increase the usage of ICT in all sectors of the society and enhance human resources and institutional and professional capacity in this area.

Laws on Communication and Postal Services were adopted, respectively, in 2001 and 2003. A package of Information Technology Laws is currently in drafting and will be soon tabled to the Parliament. The Communications Regulatory Commission and the Universal Service Fund for Rural ICT Projects were established to help liberalize the ICT sector and ensure fair competition and local investment.

The National ICT Committee headed by the Prime Minister leads the national ICT development process with the active participation of both private sector and civil society. Mongolia adopted in 2002 its "Medium Term Strategy for the Development of ICT". The central communication network has been converted to digital technology through foreign investment and ODA funding. Important projects on ICT Park and Training Center were implemented successfully.

In developing ICT, Mongolia with a sparsely populated large territory is encountering numerous difficulties, quite specific in their nature. Providing the public, particularly youth and children, with the computer knowledge, giving them skills to use ICT productively in their daily lives is a paramount task. Establishment of training facilities with required hardware and technology at the school level for enhancing knowledge and capacity to use ICT equipment, to exchange information and to apply modern systems and software continue to be a challenge.

The short term objective that we pursue in Mongolia in the area of ICT is to expand broadband penetration both in urban and rural areas based on the currently existing communication infrastructure, to fully utilize the broadband network in order to increase information usage and, subsequently, to reduce the digital gap between rural and urban areas. We also seek to enhance the legal and technological environment and capacity building in order to fully introduce electronic delivery of the public services.

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

*Bernard Weston, Permanent Representative to the United Nations*

This first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society comes at a particularly opportune time for my country. On Monday December 15, 2003, the Trinidad and Tobago National ICT Strategic Plan will be formally launched. The Plan will serve as a roadmap for the empowering of people, innovation, education, information technology and infrastructure, to create an enabling environment that will accelerate social, economic and cultural development.

What the process of formulating the National ICT Plan has demonstrated to us is that our situation in Trinidad and Tobago closely mirrors the issues, challenges, and opportunities which have been identified by many of the distinguished speakers over the past three days.

While Trinidad and Tobago's approach to ICT reflects our unique national circumstance and cultural identity, we are nevertheless comforted by the fact that we are in a position to benefit, indeed draw inspiration from, the experiences of the wider global community in general, and the initiatives emanating from WSIS in particular.

In this context, may I be permitted to make a simple observation. Trinidad and Tobago, a Small Island Developing State with a land area of just over 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.3 million, is nevertheless internationally renowned for its cultural and ethnic diversity. Indeed, one can argue that our Steelband, our Calypso Music and our world famous Carnival are in many respects better established as an international brand than the name Trinidad and Tobago itself.

What we have found is that diversity, when properly harnessed to create a coherent national community of interest, can be a most formidable tool for national empowerment. However, the process of creating a national consensus is a complex, dare I say sometimes tortuous task which requires the reconciliation of many diverse points of view. I therefore wish to join those who have made such passionate and eloquent appeals for the inclusion of the perspectives of minority and special interest groups within the process.

The ability of the World Summit to promote the principles enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and thereby to effectively address such challenging issues as the need to achieve a gender equality perspective; take into account the special needs of older persons and persons with disabilities; and to effectively bring ICT to bear on the issues of poverty eradication and employment creation, will ultimately be the benchmarks by which the success of our deliberations will be judged.

Furthermore, in Trinidad and Tobago we are of the firm belief that, far from facilitating the emergence of a uniform and monochrome global culture as some people fear, ICT in fact offers a unique opportunity to preserve and indeed celebrate the vibrant diversity of the international community.

As Secretary General Kofi Annan so perceptively emphasized in his Address to this forum on Wednesday, the so-called Digital Divide is in fact several conceptually distinct "gaps" which all exist simultaneously. It is at once technological, infrastructural, economic, gender, commercial and geographical. For Small Island Developing states such as Trinidad and Tobago the issues of access and capacity building are particularly relevant.

It is in this context, therefore, that Trinidad and Tobago fully endorses the commitment to turn the Digital

Divide into a Digital Opportunity which will provide the enabling mechanism to allow all of humanity to become part of the emerging Information Society.

We view the WSIS Process as the creation of an environment through which the full power of ICT can be brought to bear on the issue of Development, to the benefit of all. A high priority should therefore be placed on the formulation of mechanisms which actively encourage innovative ways in which to harness technology, as compared to focusing more on the establishment of the legal and functional framework through which ICT will be governed.

We believe that it is through the adoption of an enabling as opposed to a regulatory approach to the task at hand that the full potential of ICT as a tool for development will be realized. In this regard we in Trinidad and Tobago support the multi-stakeholder consultative process involving Government, Private Sector and Civil Society adopted at this forum.

Our national consultations reflect the conclusion incorporated into the Draft Declaration of Principles, that the development of an appropriate Information and Communication Infrastructure is a pre-requisite for a successful transition to the Information Society. To mention just a few of our initiatives, Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken such disparate tasks as:

- The incorporation of online access for the handicapped and disabled within our National Library system;
- taking the first steps towards planning and executing a national network of Community Access Centers, supported by appropriate local content; and
- The incorporation of ICT into the infrastructure and curriculum of what will eventually become a seamless education system that fully incorporates the principle of lifelong learning

I would like to emphasize that Trinidad and Tobago shares a strong community of interest on the issue of ICT with other Small Island Developing States, and in particular with the other Member States of the Caribbean Community – CARICOM as we refer to ourselves.

## **MALAYSIA**

*Amar Leo Moggie, Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia*

In shaping our visions and goals for an information society it is important that right at the beginning we

recognize the fact that ICT is more than a tool, it provides a rich environment for the generation, dissemination and application of information and knowledge, enabling the maximum potential for socio-economic development.

Malaysia, is happy to note that the Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan, which will be adapted at this Summit, gives significant focus on the issues concerning bridging the digital divide. Malaysia fully supports the inclusion in the Declaration of Principles of the Digital Solidarity Agenda aimed at bridging this digital gap by promoting access to ICTs, creating digital opportunities by making ICTs more affordable and harnessing the potential of ICTs for development.

The high cost of ICT services including software and hardware constitutes a major impediment to the global efforts to lessen the digital divide. The recent ITU Digital Access Index has confirmed that there is an interdependent correlation between ICT costs and the levels of development. Countries with the lowest level of telephone and Internet usage have the highest ICT costs.

Thus, global efforts must be intensified to ensure that the cost of ICT products and services is affordable given the reality of the per capita income of the majority in the developing world.

While the value of intellectual property is recognized, it needs to be balanced by the reality of social responsibility. As an option to reduce dependency, the idea of using open-source software needs to be explored and evaluated. Besides cost competitiveness, the use of open-source software can also complement efforts in capacity building and development of local content in line with our commitment to cultural diversity.

Outsourcing of ICT services (e.g. call-centers, data-centers and shared services) can also promote ICT development in developing countries. We should all help promote, rather than restrict, outsourcing. It has been estimated for the US, for every dollar spent on offshore business, the total potential benefit to the US economy is some USD 1–14. Outsourcing and off-shoring lead to global wealth creation where everyone wins.

The central issue of any global effort to narrow the digital gap is the issue of financing. The consensus on examining the possibility of creating a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund is commendable and timely. But we must bear in mind the fact that such initiatives in the past have not met with much success. It is therefore important that in deliberating the modalities of this Fund, we should consider new and innovative mechanisms.

The idea of a global corporate tax to fund infrastructure development for instance had been mooted and deserves some consideration. In the case of ICT, a global tax on corporate entities can contribute towards financing capacity building in human resources and the development of ICT infrastructure; particularly in developing countries. This will lead towards wider penetration and usage of ICT in the developing world, unlocking vast and vibrant new markets for ICT products and services and at the same time narrow the digital gap.

ICT has a tremendous transforming potential that can both increase the productivity of developed countries whilst leapfrogging developing countries to a level where their purchasing power is vastly increased. As such a mutually acceptable means of increasing investment in ICT in developing countries, should be given due priority.

## **RWANDA**

*Paul Kagame, President*

ICT is an enabler, and we are determined to take advantage of the many benefits that accrue from its applications, and the new opportunities it creates for nations and communities.

The issue for us is not whether it is worthwhile for us to make use of ICT, but rather whether ICT can be used appropriately to meet the needs of our people and achieve our development objectives.

The challenge for us, in the developing world, is how best to apply ICT to provide more leverage in our fight against poverty, disease, illiteracy, lack of information and skilled workforce.

We in Rwanda have had a fair share of these problems, some of them inherited from the 1994 genocide. But we believe that we have in place an ambitious ICT program that will effectively deal with these problems.

ICT has been integrated into our development strategy, as a catalyst for economic growth and social transformation.

We now use ICT as an instrument to enhance unity and reconciliation, to strengthen the participatory justice system we call Gacaca, and as an instrument of empowering women.

We use it also as a basis for the consolidation of our decentralization program and democratic governance. Rwanda is a founding member of the Development Gateway project, intended to use ICT for development.

We plan to provide broadband connectivity to all secondary schools within three years, using optic fiber and wireless technology.

These will also serve as tele-centers for the benefit of the rural communities in the catchment areas, with the ultimate aim of providing universal access.

Given that we are a landlocked country, modern information and communications technology holds great potential for us. We therefore plan to transform Rwanda into a technological hub within the Great Lakes Region, providing low cost and accessible means to communicate within the region and beyond.

Of course, elaborating policies and plans is one thing; mobilizing resources to implement them is another.

## **MOZAMBIQUE**

*Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President*

I strongly believe, based on the experience of Mozambique, that ICTs are indispensable tools for economic, social and political development. In my country, as well as in most of the developing countries, information society cannot be established without basic ICT infrastructure and skilled human resources. Therefore developed and developing nations must come together to make the Information Society a reality for all. The ICTs are the vehicle that will let information flow freely, allowing ideas and knowledge to be shared as a basic human right.

In Mozambique we are committed to build an Information Society. My Government has established a high level task force on ICT composed by government, business as well as civil society leaders. The ICT Policy and its implementation Strategy are the roadmap to the creation of the Information Society in Mozambique. The global economy requires the countries to develop abilities to use efficiently the ICTs as a way to improve their competitiveness.

Even though we are a poor country, we have gone beyond the dilemma of having to choose between ICTs and other development imperatives. ICTs, today, are the enablers and engines of spurring development in all sectors.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is the vehicle to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), seeks to use the ICTs to accelerate economic growth and development. Through NEPAD we are fostering intra-regional trade for the attainment of the goals of an African common market.

ICTs play an important role in data collection and processing which are key for the review of the political, economic and corporate governance at the national

level, as well as at regional and continental in the context of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

Africa calls upon all development partners to come forward and lend their unequivocal support in building an Information Society that is inclusive. We call upon all our bilateral and multilateral partners, governments and development agencies, private companies, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders to join hands with us, in Mozambique and in the African continent, and open a new chapter in the North-South and South-South co-operation.

The success of the Information Society will be judged by the degree of improvement and progress of ICTs as an important tool for the sustainable development of human kind.

The Information Society would not be complete if cultural expressions such as music, singing, dancing, performing arts were not included. They are actively used in Africa to transfer information and knowledge, including combat of endemic diseases HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. They also convey messages of peace, solidarity and tolerance.

## TONGA

*Prince Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, Prime Minister and Minister of Communications*

ICT has enormous power to change economic structures and greatly contribute to economic prosperity and a better quality of life. Additionally, it can enrich people's lives through providing greater choice and supporting social, welfare and cultural activities.

Development of such a vision for ICT services and applications must be driven not only by local market parameters, but a recognition that the global nature of the information economy transcends national borders and interests. Similarly, any related policy framework should be designed to deliver a step-function improvement in the provision of services and applications that will guide its development. It should be centered on the need to give every citizen access to ICT tools so that all individuals can share the benefits of ICT.

Tonga has adopted the same set of principles driven by an understanding that expanded connectivity will stimulate domestic growth and will provide the scope for greater Tongan participation in the global information economy, guided by its prime objective which is "To improve sector performance to ensure domestic and global connectivity throughout the Kingdom of Tonga. This includes improving quality of life, geo-

graphic coverage, service affordability and access to new service applications."

This has resulted in the recent liberalization of the market and the introduction of competition. Within a year of implementing these policy decisions, tariff for almost all services dropped significantly by more than 200 percent. Teledensity, the number of mobile subscribers and Internet users have both doubled.

A Universal Access System is currently being designed to ensure that any citizen who requires communications access, can obtain it. This also includes emergency access communication from uninhabited islands. Indeed, ICT has offered a historic and an unprecedented opportunity not only to bridging digital divide but also to place its potential at the service of humanity to make our world a better place.

## NIGERIA

*Olusegun Obasanjo, President*

I want to seize this opportunity to remind us that the major goal of the Information Society is to seek to achieve the bridging of the digital divide between the developed and developing countries and among the urban and rural areas with a view to transforming the digital divide into digital opportunities so that no individual or community is left behind in the ICT revolution. In the present situation, almost everyone in the developed countries has access to ICTs, whereas in sub-Saharan Africa, overall fixed line teledensity is about 1 to 130 inhabitants while Internet, Computers, and Television are available to only a handful of elites and urban dwellers.

The challenges to development are numerous to countries of the South. We are still struggling to provide the basic necessities of life which we lack like food, shelter, safe drinking water and health care services. Furthermore, social infrastructures like schools, roads, hospitals, electricity, etc, are either in a state of disrepair or non-existent. Our countries are, however, endowed with natural and human resources which we can develop with international support and cooperation to move us forward in our socio-economic progress. While faced with these challenges, we are also confronted with the digital revolution. We are, therefore, placed in a dicey situation i.e. how to share the meager resources between the basic necessities of life and provision of ICT infrastructure. This situation underscores the need for concerted efforts at national, regional and international levels to address the imbalance and the challenges of development.



In spite of the difficulties, Nigeria has made some efforts to address the problems. We have adopted a national ICT Policy which aims at creating the necessary enabling environment with emphasis on public-private partnership for ICT development. To this end, appropriate machinery has already been put in place to ensure that our country is part of the evolving Information Society. Given the tremendous progress that has been made in this respect, it is gratifying to note that quite a substantial number of Nigerians have become computer literate thereby increasing the number of Internet users. Nigeria is making efforts to integrate ICTs into various sectors of development including Agriculture, Health, Arts, Culture and Tourism, Education, Trade and Industry, Law Enforcement, Urban and Rural Development, Banking as well as Administration. This is preparatory to our e-governance program.

In addition, Nigeria has enacted a National Telecommunications Act to give direction to the industry and create investor-confidence in the economy. An independent regulatory body has been established with powers to operate without interference. This has led to the introduction of a variety of new services, increased foreign and domestic investment as well as the intensification of competition. Within the past four years, fixed telephone lines have increased from about 300,000 lines to about 720,000 while mobile telephones increased from less than 50,000 to about 2,500,000. Direct foreign and domestic investment in the sector amounts to about four billion dollars. This record of achievement over a short period is unprecedented in Africa.

Our government will continue to put in place initiatives aimed at creating the necessary enabling environment to give comfort to and reassure investors not only of the rich market of over 140 million people in Nigeria but of the safety of their investment and integrity of the key institutions in moderating their intervention.

Part of the related achievements which my Government has recorded is the recent launching into the orbit of Nigeria's first Satellite called NIGERIA SAT-I. That singular effort will undoubtedly assist the country in breaking new grounds in data gathering for use in areas such as disaster and environmental management, agriculture and urban planning. My government has also given approval for the design, building and launching of a communication satellite. This shall serve as a strategic backbone infrastructure for ICT development in the country.

The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), a new initiative of African leaders for the economic transformation of the continent, has accorded

ICT the necessary priority as a vehicle for accelerated development. To complement this initiative, the assistance and cooperation of our development partners is urgently needed especially in the areas of capacity building, infrastructure development, technology transfer and funding.

Nigeria wholeheartedly welcomes the global effort "to build a people-centered, inclusive Information Society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge; enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner." It is precisely for this reason that Nigeria has participated fully in all the preparatory processes leading to this first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The existing digital divide, which has further widened the gap in the economic and technological development between the North and South calls for renewed commitment to the declaration of principles and full implementation of the action plan on how to bridge this digital divide.

I wish to remind our development partners that it is in our mutual interest for them to support Africa's effort to be part of the emerging Information Society so that it can contribute more to human development, including the global fight against terrorism. The precarious global security situation which calls for concerted efforts by all countries has made the creation of an all-inclusive Information Society an urgent imperative.

It is against this background that I call on the developed and industrialized countries of the North to support the initiative on the Digital Solidarity Fund as a practical measure for redressing the digital imbalance.

## **ROMANIA**

*Ion Iliescu, President*

Being confronted with problems regarding transition from a state centralized economy to free-market economy, such as weak institutional capacities and also by red tape and corruption, Romania introduced, within the last two years, the instruments of the electronic governance at the level of central and local administrations, including electronic tenders for public procurement. The outcome is promising from the standpoint of costs, efficiency, as well as transparency.

Romania has designed and implemented a strategy of developing of promoting the knowledge based society, and places great emphasis on education. By 2004, the

Romanian schools will be equipped with about 500,000 computers. We strongly develop, also in the field of education, the software industry, that we consider a genuine engine of the sustainable economic growth.

Our expertise in the field makes us believe that it is necessary to define an agenda of digital solidarity that should be sustained by mechanisms that stimulate and motivate the public and private actors to effectively use the nations' resources of creativity. The optimal allocation of resources remains a real challenge for the sustainable development of the Romanian society in compliance with the ITC requirements.

Information technologies by themselves do not solve the problems and are not a panacea. They can only intensify the positive phenomena and processes, if used rationally, within open political and economic systems, that seek for the optimum from the social costs standpoint. In other words, the information society is genuinely democratic.

There is a most direct link between development and democracy. The structures of the information society allow for the development of some new forms of social solidarity, community life and direct democracy. We have the opportunity to create a democratic society at the global level, by generalizing the citizens' rights and freedoms and setting up the world wide civil society, as a pro-active factor oriented towards reducing the economic and social gaps.

In this process, Europe, in full swing of reunification and creation of a European identity, is called to play a key-role, by reducing the existent economic gap inside the European continent, thanks to the European social model, that mixes the prerequisites of the economic development with the needs of an effective social protection.

The social dimension is a determining element of the Information Society, entailing the existence of some available state-of-the-art public education services and a broad base for the recruitment of the political, economic and cultural elites, as well as systems of social solidarity.

In this context, Romania is constantly improving the offer of the services available on-line for an increasing number of users.

I consider that the WSIS represents a great opportunity for clarifying and facilitating the consensus on the key issues of the knowledge-based society, founded on large public-private partnerships.

Globalization through promoting "the information society for all" does not mean to diminish the diversity and the vigor of local cultures, on the contrary.

ITC represents, of course, a reliable engine for the economic development. But it cannot solve, by itself, the complex social problems we are facing on short and long term, and, in particular, the big gap between rich and poor. That is why ITC has to be people-centered, by an adequate regulatory framework and by functional institutional mechanisms of the world market, able to address the pending issue of matching economic efficiency with social justice and equality. Thus, we should involve in this process the main stakeholders, the government, the private sector and civil society.

The age that we are living in is not only one of the access to information but also one of a permanent search for the balance between the imperatives of the economy and the needs of the society. It can be done only by our joint efforts, guided by key words such as: affordability, universal access, transparency, sustainability and connectivity. Romania is ready for this.

## **NEPAL**

*Kamal Thapa, Minister for Information and Communications*

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have dramatically altered our way of life and widened our horizon. We have witnessed remarkable improvements brought about by the ICTs in all fields be they business, education, medicine or other social and economic activities. It is vividly clear that if harnessed properly, they can be effective instruments to tackle many contemporary socio-economic and other development challenges. But unfortunately, this revolution has by passed a vast majority of people, mostly from the developing countries. Between developed and developing nations, and within societies, the benefits of ICTs continue to remain uneven. And, turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all is a real challenge for all of us.

Our concern in Nepal today is for creating such an environment for its over all development so that all segments of society could derive meaningful benefit from it. Even in the midst of formidable paucity of financial and human resources, and lack of adequate physical infrastructure, His Majesty's Government of Nepal is striving hard to create an enabling environment, where all people including the poor and the vulnerable, are able to get an affordable and equitable access to information infrastructure. In this context, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has adopted the policy of e-strategy by developing a framework of e-

governance, e-commerce, e-education and e-medicine. We have plans to provide at least 2 telephone lines in each of about 4000 villages and establish 1500 IT access centers by the year 2007.

Similarly, right to information is guaranteed by the Constitution of the country. The Government is therefore committed to playing the role of facilitator in ensuring and promoting this right among the people. Aware of the vital role that the media can play in creating and sustaining an equitable and inclusive information society, we have adopted a liberal policy in this sector. This has created a healthy competition with the burgeoning growth of the private sector in the print media as well as TV and FM radio operation.

As the current Chair of the SAARC, Nepal would like to recall that a meeting of the SAARC Information Ministers was recently held in New Delhi. This meeting has underlined, among others, the need of the commitment at the national, regional and international level to promote ICTs for bridging the digital divide, particularly for the disadvantaged and the marginalized section of the societies.

We firmly believe that the realization of a common vision of building a truly people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society is possible. But to do so, efforts at creating opportunity for equal access to information and communications and making them affordable must receive an enhanced level of international support. Increased support and cooperation in areas such as, training, technology transfer, human resource, and information and communication infrastructure development would be crucial to build the national capacity in these countries. And nowhere is this need so more pressing than in the least-developed and the land locked countries in their efforts to bridge the digital divide and effectively contribute to improve the quality of life of the people. Therefore we appreciate appropriate financing and institutional mechanism to fulfill the objectives of the digital solidarity agenda.

ICT has become a powerful tool for growth and prosperity for many in today's world. But we should also stress the development dimension of this tool. We should effectively use it for bringing about real transformation in the lives of the poor and marginalized segments of the societies around the world. That is possible only in a true spirit of partnership and solidarity. We would like this summit to play a catalytic role in paving the way for a new era of sustained peace, equity and prosperity with the strategic use of Information and Communication technologies to attain these noble objectives.

## PAKISTAN

*Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, Prime Minister*

This Summit marks recognition of the fact that we are all citizens of an Information Society, which necessitates the creation of a new social contract geared to universalizing the endowments of this unique era. In the future, the ability to access and use these tools effectively would determine the prosperity and well-being of all nations.

But we have a long way to go. The enormity of the digital opportunity is marred by a vast digital divide. To bridge this divide is the challenge of our time. It must not be allowed to grow further.

The digital divide is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that separates people within and between countries. The speed of global technological and economic transformation demands concerted global action.

We should create an information society which embraces everyone. Poorer regions of our planet are threatened with structural irrelevance associated with their technological obsolescence. The Summit must therefore aim to:

- a. Create an information society which is inclusive and provides equal opportunity to everyone, everywhere;
- b. Develop tools and mechanisms that would open the doors of technology to the poorer segments of mankind;
- c. Encompass a commitment to assist the developing countries in developing their ICT infrastructure;
- d. Protect universal norms particularly our moral and spiritual values to which we all aspire;
- e. Ensure the security of our information systems free from the threat of infiltration;
- f. Allow all peoples to imbibe the knowledge which the ICT revolution promises; and finally
- g. Harness the digital revolution to lift the dispossessed from the throes of deprivation.

The Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action before the Summit are pregnant with promise. The presence of so many world leaders should provide the political impetus to translate hope into action. We must work together to evolve a Digital Development Agenda. The knowledge intensive nature of the Information Society calls for a global accord and partnership so that the fruits of technology are evenly distributed. This critical opportunity in the march of civilization must be

seized by all of us – governments, business leaders and the civil society – to rectify the historical wrongs that had caused the development gap amongst nations.

In Pakistan, my Government is engaged in harnessing digital technology for the economic advancement of our people. We have earmarked a significant part of our limited resources to build the necessary infrastructure, promote computer literacy and widen ICT applications in health, education and public sector management. In this demanding enterprise we need support of

the international community.

I would like to add that in Pakistan as we speedily move towards deregulation and privatization, we offer tremendous investment opportunities not only for fixed and mobile telephone operations but also for software companies and IT enabling back-office service companies, to service Pakistan's own expanding ICT needs and potential and through this potential for the global community.