



Statement

by

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and
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at the

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on

Item 49

**Information and communication technologies for
development**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Two years have gone by since the adoption of the Geneva Declaration of Principle and the Geneva Plan of Action. We are now preparing, the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Technology to be held next month in Tunis.

The critical contribution of information and communication technologies to economic and social development is universally acknowledged. This is why the Geneva Summit reiterated the need for universal access to information and knowledge and also called for democratic internet governance. The important role of information and communication technologies for development has also been highlighted in the outcomes of recent United Nations Conferences and Summits, as they will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. And for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States suffering from economic, social and/or geographical marginalization these technologies ensure a deeper and more effective participation in the digital global society.

Mr. Chairman,

The Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States require special attention and assistance in order to enter the global world of information and communication technologies. Indeed, although fulfilling the basic needs of the millions of vulnerable people is undoubtedly the number one priority, they should not be marginalized in the process of globalization and equally be integrated in the global economy. Their lack of resources, of human capacity and technology jeopardize their sustainable development and highlight their need for an increased support and cooperation of the international community in their efforts to enhance capacity in information and communication technology.

Mr Chairman,

Commitment Four of the **Brussels Programme of Action** adopted in 2001 at the Third UN Conference of LDCs, calls for Building productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs.

Indeed, the LDCs have committed themselves to articulate policies and measures, to attract foreign direct investment conducive to transfer of technology and promote appropriate and sustainable technologies. Their development partners have committed themselves to support them with financial, technical and/or other kind of assistance, to create linkages with developed countries firms, to find innovative mechanism to accord LDCs special treatment in facilitating acquisition, transfer and development of technology to partner with the LDCs, to promote linkages between research and development institutions in the LDCs and their development partners, to comply with multilateral commitment and to take concrete measures to facilitate access to/or provide technology as part of ODA.

This commitment by both LDCs and their development partners includes improving access of the poor to communication services.

The communications and information technology is also very relevant for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as trade facilitation is identified as one of the five priorities in this programme. Broad application of modern information technology to reduce red tapes and paper work is an important factor for ensuring speedy movement of goods in transit.

Small island developing States face formidable challenges regarding trade liberalisation and globalisation. They are at risk of remaining marginalized unless urgent measures are undertaken to accord special treatment to these countries for increased market access, development assistance, debt relief, and capacity building. The development prospects of these countries will be enhanced through supporting not only export and industrial base diversification and human and institutional capacity but also technology transfer.

Mr. Chairman,

The above commitment of the Brussels Programme of Action has been translated into measurable targets (1) Increasing computer literacy among students in higher institutions and universities by 50% and in junior and high schools by 25% by 2015 and (2) Increasing average telephone density to 5 main lines per 100 inhabitants and Internet connections to 10 users per 100 inhabitants by the year 2010.

From 1990 to 2002, the number of telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population in the LDCs, went from 0.27 to 2.21, the number of personal computers in use per 100 population rose from 0.12 to 0.56 and internet users per 100 population increased from 0.18 to 0.4 from 2000 to 2002.

At the current path, if an extra effort is not made by both LDCs and developed countries, we might not meet the agreed targets.

Mr Chairman,

To accelerate the reduction of the "digital divide", leadership and capacity development are essential.

I welcome the African initiative of the **Digital Solidarity Fund**, inspired by His Excellency, President Abdoulaye Wade of the Republic of Senegal, within the New Partnership for Development in Africa. It aims at promoting and financing development projects that will enable people and countries so far excluded to enter the new era of the Information Society. It is noteworthy that 60% of its resources for projects will be benefiting populations of least developed countries.

The Fund is supported by the initial contributions of the 20 Founding Members. It is relying on voluntary contributions and here I would strongly like to encourage contributions to its financing.

Secretary-General-General Kofi Annan, in his opening remarks at the World Summit on the information Society in Geneva in 2003, pointed out that it was perhaps the first global Summit to be built around an opportunity rather than a problem. Indeed, the opportunity to harness the gains of technology is available to all.

At the eve of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, I strongly urge all the actors to take major steps towards the reduction of the digital

divide that marginalizes the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States, the most vulnerable groups of our world.

Today I urge the technologically advanced countries to engage their resources and creative energies in assisting these countries build their technology infrastructure and expertise. We have an unprecedented opportunity to recognize the power of technology and harness it for development in a way that will be inclusive of the most vulnerable segments of humanity and assist them in pulling themselves out of the morass of poverty

Thank you.