Text of Youth Speech to Plenary

Theme: Youth

From: Ana Pascual, July 17

Technology is not the most important component of the information society. People are. Especially young people. In many of the countries we come from, young people constitute up to 60% of the population. Young people are the most avid consumers of technology. Youth are the driving force behind technological innovation and entrepreneurship. We all know this.

And this is why it's critical for our contribution and role to be recognized strongly and clearly in the Declaration of Principles. Paragraph 16 is fundamental.

Youth Employment is crucial. Unemployment rates amongst young people are consistently higher than that of the general population. The UN Millennium Development Goals demand that global partnerships be created to ensure decent and productive work for youth, yet this goal is not referenced in the present text. Why?

ICTs provide new opportunities for job creation - youth themselves are providing entrepreneurial leadership in ICT industries, creating jobs for themselves, and for others. Youth need support for their enterprise -- a 'level playing field' and access to financing and infrastructure. Further, government regulations must be created that ensure safety, equity, and job security in the workplace.

Education is crucial. Technology must be mainstreamed, and not merely incorporated, into school curricula. IT must become an integral part of all disciplines, from the humanities to the sciences, and not be confined to computer science classes, as is too often the case. Students and not only teachers can be a gateway to the information society. In school we are often overlooked as a source of technological expertise. Youth should be encouraged to share their ICT knowledge through peer-to-peer learning, and contribute to the creation of meaningful curricula.

Regarding the Action Plan, youth demand a concise and time-bound document which contains clear means of implementation. The present text is simply not good enough. Where are the specific commitments? What are we actually going to do? And who is going to do it? Will the energy of government and business die down after this Summit, as with every other UN Summit?

Young people have specific needs, and we are already taking the initiative to address them. One year ago, we created a strategy and Coalition - Youth Creating Digital Opportunities. It marries our participation in policy, with the establishment of networks, and the creation of support mechanisms for tangible youth-led projects. At the Summit, together with other stakeholders, we will launch YCDO as a major partnership initiative. This will include the establishment of a Youth ICT Fund. Let's work together!

In summary, youth are key players. Keep our paragraphs! Youth Employment, and Education are primary areas of action. And we are looking for this Summit to realize the potential of people in the information society. Thank you.