Baku Declaration on Digital Divide and Knowledge Economy-Baku (2004)

27 November 2004

Global ICT Conference 2004

Baku

25-28 November, 2004

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History has endowed the Eurasia region with a rich tapestry of peoples, cultures, and natural resources. In the past decade, rapid technological change has made possible the virtual pathways of an electronic silk route, linking Asia with Europe, creating a new heartland for an emerging regional knowledge-based economy. The future of the Eurasia region depends upon policies that overcome the digital divide and further the transition to a knowledge-based economy. These policies must ensure that the benefits of the knowledge economy are open and available to all, and that the information infrastructures on which it depends are secure, robust and reliable.

> *Reaffirming* the Declaration of Principles and Action Plan adopted by the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003); and,

> *Recognizing* the centrality of overcoming the digital opportunities divide and building knowledge economies to meeting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals;

We the Participants of the Baku Conference on the Digital Divide and Knowledge Economy, hereby agree on the following principles and priorities:

1. **Government Leadership and Initiative.**
   Government leadership is required to create vision for national development that represents the interest and needs of all of its citizens. Societal transformation necessary in the information age entails difficult choices and tradeoffs that must defend the broader public interest. As representatives and custodians of the public trust, governments must lead to establish an enabling environment that benefits all of their citizens. Government is required to ensure both political and administrative support to ICT Development, demonstrating commitment and ownership towards ICT as tool for development.

2. **Strengthened Partnership with Private Sector.**
   Private sector contribution is critical to implementing long-term solutions to the digital divide and establishing the basis for sustainable knowledge economies. Knowledge economies and the infrastructures on which they depend, require a culture of initiative, innovation and risk-taking that the private sector can provide. "Lessons learned" and best practices of existing partnerships need to be shared, and new forms of partnership, including between the public and private sectors, should be promoted and encouraged to emerge.

3. **Dialogue, Consultation and Partnership with Civil Society.**
   Dialogue with civil society is necessary so that the interests of all citizens -- particularly those least advantaged - have a voice in shaping the knowledge society. In an age of increased global insecurity, the rights of citizens to provide input to public policy must be defended, in order to ensure that legitimate security concerns do not undermine long-term prosperity, development and internationally recognized human rights conventions.

4. **Inclusion**
   ICTs and the benefits of the information revolution must be available and accessible to all citizens, especially socially disadvantaged groups and peoples. Special emphasis must be placed on the full inclusion of women, and consideration given to societies that are recovering from the effects of natural disasters and conflict. Measures and policies must be developed through multi-stakeholder partnerships and dialogue between government, the private sector, and civil society, to build an inclusive knowledge-based society.

5. **Education**

Education is the key to building knowledge economies. Overcoming the digital divide and building sustainable knowledge economies is not possible without a long-term commitment to education, lifelong learning and support for research. Education must be accessible and open to all citizens; knowledge economies are dependent on all the contributions of all segment of society. A knowledgeable, educated and skilled citizenry can contribute most to the prosperity and stability of the region. The use of information and communications technologies in education, where possible, should be encouraged; as should the strengthening of international cooperation and networking in education on a regional and global level.

6. **Accountable Internet Governance**

The Internet is a strategically important component of national information infrastructures. All stakeholders - the private sector, civil society and national authorities (which constitutionally represent the public trust and act to defend and represent the public interest) -- should participate on an equal and democratic basis in the governance of the Internet through appropriate representative international mechanisms. The character of the Internet as open and democratic medium should be preserved and furthered. In this context, we support the work of the Working Group on Internet Governance.

7. **Financing the ICT for Development.**

Ensuring that the benefits of the knowledge economy will be equitable requires a commitment from national governments, the private sector, and civil society. Development of new partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral and bilateral actors, should be encouraged. Best practices must be shared, and investment in less advantaged areas supported to ensure the prosperity and security of the Eurasia region. In this context, we support the work of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms, to review the adequacy of existing mechanisms in meeting the challenges of ICT for Development. The objectives of the Digital Solidarity Fund are meant to deal with inadequacy of present measures, and more effective financing mechanism need to be identified. Governments should also be encouraged to include specific allocations in state budgets for expenditures designed to overcome the digital divide and further progress toward a knowledge economy.

8. **Safety, Security, Privacy**

Given the strategic nature of National Information Infrastructures, and their centrality to the functioning of all modern societies – reliability, security and protection from abuse requires urgent attention. The problem of computer viruses and Spam urgently needs to be addressed. Criminal activities exploit areas in which law does not exist, or where technology is moving faster than the ability of society to adopt rules and regulations that safeguard the public good. Security is a requirement of the information age that defends the state and societal interest and must be ensured through appropriate self-regulation, national legislation and international treaties, norms and conventions. Respect for individual privacy and protection of personal data is also fundamental to development of an information society that balances security concerns for security with internationally accepted norms such as the United National Declaration of Human Rights.

9. **Intellectual Property Rights and Content**

Content development and an open and internationally equitable mechanism for adjudicating Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are vital to realise a vision for sustainable cultural identity and diversity, and make accessible the benefits of a global knowledge society. We recognize the role of IPR as critical to facilitating economic development, but it must be balanced by the right for circulation and sharing of knowledge, including recognizing the importance of Free and Open Software and alternative licensing regimes. Council of Europe conventions concerning regulating content and activities deemed to be harmful or exploitive needs to be addressed through appropriate national legislation, and international law.

The Conference calls on the hosts of the World Summit on the Information Society to organize an open forum on the issues outlined above, and to facilitate global understanding of their importance in the conduct of the Summit. This includes issues of best practice in content creativity, showcasing innovative applications, and a celebration of the achievements of creators in the context of the World Summit Awards.

Considering the importance of the forthcoming Tunis Summit, the Baku Conference calls on all governments, the private sector, civil society, and International Organizations to participate actively in the work of the Summit, its related fora and exhibition.

We appeal to governments, civil society, the private sector, International Organizations and donors to accommodate and apply these principles.

We call for these principles and priorities to be noted and reflected in the final documents of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, November 2005.