WSIS: World Summit on the Information Society

Statement by H.E.Mr. Taro Aso

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(Good Afternoon)

1. Introduction:

Your Excellencies, Honorable Government Representatives,
Distinguished Participants and Guests:

I am honored to have this opportunity to speak to you today, here
in this beautiful city of Geneva. On behalf of the Japanese people,
I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the warm
welcome extended to us by President Couchepin, representatives
of the Swiss Government, and all of the citizens of Geneva.

I also extend my appreciation to Secretary-General Annan of the
United Nations, President Samassekou of the Preparatory
Committee, Secretary-General Utsumi of the International

Telecommunication Union (ITU) and everyone involved, for their efforts over the last two years to make this important Summit meeting possible today.

I believe, fundamentally, that humankind has a bright future, this means not only the people of Japan, but indeed, all of humanity. One of the best reasons for optimism is the dynamic influence technological progress has had, and surely will have, in our lives.

Looking back at the 20th century, regardless of many adversities and blows preventing human development, such as large scale wars and oil crises, among others, our progress far surpassed that of all previous centuries put together. Take life expectancy, education, and transportation, for example. Could anyone have imagined the human and technological developments of the 20th century?

When we think of the reasons such growth was possible, we cannot forget the phenomenal inventions that took place in the last 100 years in all areas of our lives, much more than in the 2,000 years before.

Let me briefly touch upon the global revolution in the telecommunications sector, as an example. Even as recently as 10 years ago, highly specialized and complicated research would have required time consuming and expensive visits to the British Museum in London, the National Library in Paris or the Library of Congress in Washington, privileges available only to those with considerable time and money. However, today, access to all of these resources is possible through the internet from anywhere in the world.

The splendid growth and expansion of the 20th century will be carried on into the 21st century.   The vast knowledge of information and brain power cannot disappear from the Internet, even should we face a crisis.

Progress in the last 100 years is due largely to the advancement of knowledge. This advancement in knowledge is an irreversible phenomena which came about with the spread and accessibility of higher education to the public.

Let us reflect on the history of progress at this WSIS meeting and believe in a prosperous future society supported by information and communications technologies.

I strongly hope that such prosperity will assist in dealing with such common issues as global security, and will contribute to the development of an even better society.

2. Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference in Tokyo

Japan shares this vision, and clearly recognizes the importance of this Summit and has worked actively to contribute to its success.

For example, in January of this year, Japan hosted the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference in Tokyo. Prime Minister Koizumi was joined by more than 600 individuals representing the governments of about 60 countries and various non-government organizations.

3**. Promoting the Spread of Broadband Environment**:

In January of 2001, the Japanese Government drafted the e-Japan Strategy, a national strategy developed through cooperative efforts between the public and private sectors. Its aim was for Japan to achieve the status of the world's most advanced nation in "information and communications technology" (ICT). As a result, the world's fastest and least expensive broadband environment is now being realized.

 In July of this year, the government further announced the e-Japan Strategy Two (II) to promote one of the world's leading approaches to the application of ICT in seven sectors: such sectors as in the medical care services, food, daily living and administrative services. This program attempts to bring ICT achievements and the broadband environment closer to people's lives.

However, achieving a wide broadband environment only in Japan or in select countries is not enough. We are striving to overcome the so called "digital divide" by deploying and

expanding broadband networks, cooperating with more countries to bring their benefits to more people.

In July 2000, the Japanese Government announced "Japan's comprehensive Cooperation Package to Address the International Digital Divide", prior to the Kyushu-Okinawa Summit. This package consists of ODA and other official funding, with the view to extending a total of US$ 15 billion over five years from 2000. As you may know, the amount of US$ 4.5 billion has been used so far for implementation of assistance activities for developing countries in Africa, Asia and other regions.

Against this backdrop, in March of this year, with the cooperation of academia and industries in Japan and other Asian countries, we formulated the Asia Broadband Program. This program prepared an action plan to achieve its objectives of developing a broadband environment and accessibility in Asia.

I believe that the adoption of the WSIS Declaration of Principles and Action Plan is vital. However, at the same time, it is also extremely important to actually implement them. In that respect,

I believe that the implementation of the Asia Broadband Program can play an important role in contributing to the realization of the Summit Declaration.

In addition to affirming the development of ICT infrastructure, the Declaration of Principles of this Summit also affirms the fundamental principles of drawing real benefits from ICT applications. These include access to information, capacity building, ensuring security, importance of media, and ensuring cultural diversity. Japan will also strive for success in these areas.

4. Contributions to the Achievement of a Ubiquitous   Network Society:

Together with broadband conversion of fixed line communication network, Japan is leading the way in spreading the third generation mobile phone services, by broadband conversion of mobile telephone communications. Many countries around the world have also begun to rapidly spread wireless LAN and

technology, to create device-to-device networks, such as the development of wireless tags. All of these technologies will be indispensable to achieving the goal of "universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services" proclaimed in the WSIS Declaration of Principles.

The concept of "ubiquitous networks" is networks that connect, not only people to people but also connect people to devices and devices to devices. I have great expectations for the realization of a ubiquitous network society where social and economic activities are supported by "networks that can be used by anyone, anytime and anywhere". This "ubiquitous network society" can create a totally new information society where individuals will be able to enjoy the benefits of " sustainable economic growth" and a "safe and secure society".

I very much look forward for this WSIS to serve as a venue to spur development of the 21st-century information society, in conjunction with a strong cooperation between the ITU and other organizations.

A steady implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action will be required towards the Second Phase, to be held in Tunisia in 2005. To ensure the success of the Second Phase, Japan pledges to continue contributing to these efforts to the maxim degree possible, while continuing to cooperate with the ITU and a broad range of international organizations.

Thank you. .