

Lithuania in the Context of Global Changes

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Distinguished participants of the Summit,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania fully supports the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action prepared for adoption at this Summit. We consider this event as a crucially important step for Information Society Development in the World and bridging digital divide among the nations.

Lithuania is proud having the possibility to host last August the first World Information Technology Forum - an important WSIS preparatory conference. Main principals of Vilnius Declaration adopted by representatives from 70 countries with active participation of ITU, UNESCO and IFIP correspond to the spirit of WSIS documents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General of the ITU Mr. Y. Utsumi for his invaluable contribution to the success of Vilnius Forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania has come a long way full of complicated transformations moving from a planned economy towards a market economy. The reforms launched across all realms of life opened new possibilities for Lithuania to change fundamentally its legal architecture, to implement decisions which laid the foundations for the market to operate. Radical changes had an overall impact on the society and public life.

As knowledge plays an increasingly important role in economic development, human skills are becoming the most important production factor. One of the main new challenges faced by Lithuania today is to ensure persistent and consistent growth of knowledge economy serving

the basis for human development. Our concept of knowledge economy consists of the two main components of development:

- information society development;
- knowledge economy development.

Being a small country, Lithuania is flexible enough to swiftly adapt to the new economic trends caused by globalisation and rapid spread of IT applications in economic sector. Lithuania can boast of a relatively well developed infrastructure of fixed-line and mobile communications, broadband internet and cable television services, recovering cluster development.

The present stage of the development of the state creates new opportunities to put together the new possibilities offered by the ICTs with the forward-looking public administration solutions, thereby opening new dimensions.

Today we are delighted to note that within a relatively short time we managed to move forward significantly.

The growth of information technologies and telecommunications production has been increasing rapidly within the last several years: ITT production has increased by 40 percent within the period of 2000-2002.

In the first half of 2003, 24 percent of the entire Lithuania's population aged 15 to 74 were using the Internet.

In 2001-2002, a significant progress was made in the field of education, in supplying schools with computers. In 2002, the number of computers available per 100 pupils has increased by 60 percent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania formulated major guidelines for the creation of Government in Lithuania and set the priorities in this area. In the near future, alter the

Action Plan for the Implementation of eGovernment Concept Paper is put into place, lots of changes are to be expected in the sector of services rendered to the citizens, in the field of information management, and decision making.

Yet another very serious objective of the development of information society is building up people's competence by providing equal access to information sources. Within this context the Government encourages cooperation among businesses and public institutions. An example of such a fruitful cooperation could be the initiative "Window into the Future" undertaken by the business alliance for the development of information society, which contributed to a successful development of a network of public Internet centres. Later, this initiative was joined by the Ministry of the Home Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Knowledge society is a highly demanding challenge to Lithuania, which can only be met successfully by using concerted efforts, by reaching agreement among the broad public, and by employing strong intellectual political will. Effective and constructive cooperation of public institutions, businesses and non-governmental organisations could become extremely valuable in creating necessary environment for the public to enjoy the benefits of information society and thereby reducing informational exclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a successful conference.