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AT GENEVA



MISSION PERMANENTE  
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A GENEVE

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**Statement by**

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**to the World Summit on the Information Society**

**Geneva, 11 December 2003**

**Mr. President, Heads of States and Governments, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

First of all I should like to thank all the organizers of the WSIS, The Swiss Government and the ITU, for all the effort and work that has been put into the preparations of this most significant event.

**Mr. President,**

The turn of two centuries: XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> was in the history of the European culture the age of Enlightenment and the era of discoveries and a quest for knowledge. It was also the time when independent and free human thought was believed to have unlimited possibilities for exploring the world.

The process of setting up many institutions aiming at popularizing new ideas and the exchange of knowledge was a specific feature of that period. At that time, the exchange of information was driven by journalists, literary salons and publishing houses. Nowadays the Internet has taken over a major part of it.

The Declaration of Human Rights of that time, which we owe to France and widely propagated cult of knowledge were the impulses of later industrial revolution and profound changes in education system. Indirectly but greatly these factors contributed to the improvement of human well-being and the quality of life. These, and many others historical experiences provide us with evidence that

**free human thought is the best engine for development.**

**Mr. President,**

The unfettered exchange of information and free flow of ideas without prohibitions, gags or chains is by far the best guarantee of implementation of essential human rights. Thanks to information available and a wide access to sources of knowledge many scientific breakthroughs of vital importance to mankind were made possible. As a result of this process numerous countries have become free and independent.

Miles of barbed wires, apparatus of terror and the efforts of censors did not stop the flow of free thought and the exchange of information, which - among other factors - helped to destroy the Berlin Wall and was entirely instrumental in spreading the "Solidarity Union" message through the whole Poland and, indeed, the whole Central and Eastern Europe. People such as Nelson Mandela and Lech Walesa have become the symbols of progress and freedom.

Recently there have been lots of talk within the UN System about best practices sharing. We think there is a lot in our European experience that could be of interest to others. We are prepared to ponder and absorb what others have achieved. In the context of our Summit, such an approach to information and knowledge is the most effective way of bringing States, nations and peoples together. I come from Poland and I can assure you on the experiences of my country that the above mentioned view was confirmed by the Cold War period, the Iron Curtain and by all the ineffective efforts to control an interchange of thoughts known in the history. The follow up is well known.

Unhampered exchange of information and the free flow of ideas brings good prospects of successful fight against the stereotypes and intolerance. As Mr. Norbert Wiener once said: „To live effectively is to have information”.

With a full awareness of all the negative factors linked to the social phenomenon of the Internet, such as international digital divide, cyber crime, intellectual property rights violation and some others, the use of this medium can still be considered as a constant source of “enlightenment” and social changes. I think we shall all be deeply convinced that it will induce States and societies to recognize common imperative values such as peace, freedom, democracy, human rights and good governance.

**Mr. President,**

**The unlimited access to knowledge is the biggest enemy of intolerance.**

In Poland the development of the Information Society is supported by the governmental strategy called e-Poland. The central issues addressed in the strategy are:

- development of IT infrastructure
- facilitating development of a relevant e-content
- IT education
- providing on-line, citizen oriented public administration services
- promoting the development of e-commerce, e-learning and e-health.

We believe that the Internet and other ICTs technologies can be an effective tool for forecasting and preventing global threats. It can also be a perfect means to support the implementation of the idea of sustainable development. In my opinion, ways in which the world situation tends to evolve, creates an urgent need to build up a widely and freely accessible world information network. This network could serve to provide monitoring, forecasting and early warning with

regard to elements capable of triggering a global change and thus help to implement the principles of sustainable development.

Such a network would be vital in bringing us closer to a globalisation process and its numerous phenomena ranging from the management of human settlements, world eco-systems, population movements up to other crucial elements of global transformation.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me declare on behalf of my country our full support for all the steps facilitating the build-up of the information society world-wide, which we see as a natural societal development, improving in the long run the quality of life for everyone and for all and assuring getting on higher and higher level of civilisation and economic progress. This is a much coveted goal. We would possibly prefer slightly different language in a number of formulations of the Draft Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action as prepared for us by the Preparatory Committee. However, that coveted goal is still of utmost importance for us and we are prepared to join the consensus.