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Fiji

As a member state of the ITU and UN, the Fiji Government is very pleased to receive the invitation to WSIS Prep-Com 2 and to submit comments on the draft Action Plan and Declaration. We believe the anticipated outcome of the Summit, *to develop and foster a clear statement of political will and a concrete plan of action for achieving the goals of the Information Society, while fully reflecting all the different interests at stake*, will be of great benefit to Fiji.

The Fiji National ICT Council is responsible for the formulation and execution of the National ICT Strategy Plan 2003 – 2005. The National ICT Strategy Plan will be incorporated into the Government's comprehensive Strategic Development Plan and will be cognizant of our Pacific Island neighbour countries' National ICT Strategy Plans.

The Vision of the National ICT Strategy Plan is to:

**“TO DEVELOP FIJI INTO A VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC PACIFIC ICT CAPITAL WITH
A THRIVING DIGITAL ECONOMY AND IT EMPOWERED CITIZENS”**

4 Cornerstone Programs define the National ICT Strategy Plan:

- ❑ E-Government (ITC Services, www.itc.gov.fj);
- ❑ E-Commerce (Ministry of Commerce);
- ❑ E-Personal (Ministry of Education); and
- ❑ ICT Industry (Fiji Trade & Investment Board, www.ftib.org.fj)

Underlying the 4 Cornerstone programs is the National Information Infrastructure (NII) under the stewardship of the Ministry of Telecommunications.

ITC is the Government Dept responsible for E-Government including policy formulation, 3-year strategy plans, and the implementation or project management of outsourced E-Government applications. At present we are working to issue a Policy document and comprehensive Strategy Plan by early 2003. The first pilot E-Govt project is the development of a dynamic website for the Immigration Dept allowing customers to apply, pay for and receive Immigration services online.

ITC Services is the official IT Dept for the whole of the Fiji Government providing **I**nformation **T**echnology & **C**omputing (ITC) Services. These services include policy development and expert advice, systems development, IT infrastructure building and management, training and a customer support centre. Delivery of these services is through minicomputers and client/server systems across the largest wide area network throughout the country.

Comments on the Draft Action Plan and Declaration

The Fiji Government has reviewed the extensive work of Prep-Com 1 and the general sets of principles and themes for input to the Tokyo Regional Preparatory meeting and Prep-Com 2. Notwithstanding any omissions, we believe we have the following distinct contributions:

- 1. National ICT Strategy Plans are essential** – the Fiji Government feels that well-conceived and articulate plans outlining a vision and harnessing advanced/relevant ICT capabilities to achieve stated goals are essential for any nation seeking advanced levels of participation in the WSIS goal of an “Information Society”.

The draft Action Plan discussed at Prep-Com 2 must require participating nations at the Summit deliver National ICT Strategies with committed resources. Prep-Com 2 could identify resources for those countries that are unable to develop Plans or the resources required to fulfil the Plans.

The Summit will then serve the purpose of comparison and enrichment of the Plans, and more importantly attract partners from the private sector (GIIC, GBDe, etc) or UN organs and agencies (InfoDev, ITU EC-DC, etc) for fulfilment.

The Fiji Government would like to commend the work of the UNDP/UNOPS e-Pacifika Project in facilitating the development of National ICT Strategy Plans for 12 Pacific Island countries including Fiji.

- 2. Regional Perspective** – the WSIS Summit in 2003 will issue a Declaration of Intent and this shall be reviewed at the Summit in 2005. We believe that the WSIS should appoint Regional Commissioners responsible for or facilitating the fulfilment of the National ICT Strategy Plans for countries in the region.

We would further call for the appointment of a Pacific Commissioner separate from the usual bundling with Asia. The Pacific bowl comprises of 15 countries with a total population of less than 10 million and an estimated GDP of US\$2 Billion. Most countries comprise of distant islands with a significant rural population. Most Pacific Island countries have very large Diaspora communities in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and increasingly the United Kingdom.

It is critical that the WSIS impress upon world leaders attending the Summit that investment in ICT with resources from WSIS in the form of a Regional Commissioner and the set-up of partnerships will constitute an essential force for social development and poverty alleviation. Connectivity and access to advanced ICT are incontrovertibly linked to economic and social growth. The WSIS must persuade delegates to acknowledge this reality and with the WSIS Commitment of a Regional Commissioner must ensure that countries do not relegate ICT investment to either-or developments losing to seemingly more acute and direct needs for clean water, sanitation, schooling, health, etc.

- 3. Small Island Focus** – one of the critical guiding principles ascertained at Prep-Com 1 was the importance of communities and the utilisation of ICT for the benefit of disadvantaged groups. The list did not include rural or outer island communities which comprise 60% of Fiji’s population. The advancement of ICT into these communities must include strategies for electricity supply especially solar and wind generation (minimising any dependence on the transportation, expense, and polluting aspects of fossil fuels), sustainable projects (training, local ownership, accounting skills), and transfer of the usual skills of project management, business process re-engineering, and modelling tools.

How does the Fiji Government feel about Summit procedures and processes?^α

1. **Attendance is critical** – The Fiji Government will be making every effort to send a delegate to the Regional meetings, Prep-Com 2 and Summit 2003. The Panos/CTO Louder Voices report outlines the extreme difficulties some countries encounter in attempting to attend conferences and participating in International ICT Decision-Making.
2. **Dialogue and debate are important** - An essential prerequisite to effective public policy making is widespread agreement by and among all affected stakeholder interests. An essential prerequisite to such agreement, in turn, is vigorous, open, and widespread dialogue and debate.
3. **Agreement is essential** - While the Summit will provide a forum for dialog and debate, its delegates must be sufficiently disciplined and dedicated to not be all consumed by such deliberation. They must advance toward and achieve consensus positions on the substantive issues underlying the subjects of the Summit.
4. **Flexibility is key** - The speed and unpredictability with which the technologies and other factors underlying the “Information Society” are evolving requires that Summit procedures and processes be flexible. This can be obtained by resisting rigid and bureaucratic processes and will increase the likelihood of Summit declarations and commitments being relevant, compelling, and productive.
5. **One size does not fit all** - To maximize the relevance and value of their declarations and commitments, Summit delegates must respect that different conditions underlie evolution toward an “information society” in different places. Thus, they should avoid the imposition – or appearance thereof – of one-size-fits-all prescriptions, or identical policy frameworks, or identical timeframes on all nations.

The Fiji Government would like to join the Co-ordinating Committee of Government Interlocutors (CCGI) if such a body exists. We would be grateful if information on joining the Committee could be sent to ITC Services.

We trust that our comments will prove useful to the Preparatory Committee and be incorporated into the draft Action Plan and Declaration.

^α Points 2 – 5 taken with permission from GIIC – WSIS Fact Sheet, Robert Rogers, Dec 1, 02.
(<http://www.giic.org>)