

**STATEMENT MADE BY RIAD BAHOUN, GENERAL MANAGER OF
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TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE 2 OF WSIS/PREPCOM2
(Geneva, 25.2.2003)**

Chairman, Excellencies Ministers and Ambassadors, Mister Secretary-General, Dear participants

I would like to thank you for this new opportunity that you are giving me to address your plenary, on behalf the *Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI)* and as a representative of the *Arab Business Community* in this WSIS/PrepCom2

Before to address the content of your work which is related to the elaboration of a Draft-Declaration of Principles and of a Draft-Action-Plan, I would like to stress out the fact that after one week of work, this PrepCom2 seems to have missed an excellent opportunity to increase the efficiency of its work in particular when it has neglected to welcome the contribution presented by the stakeholders. I hope that the coming days would allow governmental delegations, working under your wise chairmanship and according to the philosophy as stated by Chairman Samassekou, to review this situation and to take appropriate decisions aiming to improve the global work engaged towards the Summit.

Having said that, I would like to ensure you that all the CCBI members are ready to provide Mrs Shope Mafole's Working Group with relevant inputs and we wish her a great success in her work noting the extreme importance of achieving this difficult task in the perspective of a Summit that Heads of State are going to be attending.

As member of the CCBI Bureau, representing there a developing country "sensitivity", TIT has introduced in the framework of PrepCom2 a contribution under #85, in which we have made number of proposals addressing the specific needs of the Arab region as well as the more global issues. In addition to that, TIT has prepared two important additional documents that aim to provide inputs for the Draft-Declaration of Principles and for the Draft-Action Plan.

Allow me, Chairman, to present through you to governmental delegations, the core of these inputs-documents.

A- With respect to the **Preamble of the Draft-Declaration** and according to the structure agreed by delegations as recalled in DT2/Rev1, I would suggest that you limit this preamble to a clear **Definition of the Global Information Society (GIS)**, which could state as follows:

"The Global Information Society (GIS) represents the social and human construction which is progressively built by all the vital forces of the world since they have started few decades ago, looking at the fantastic, quick and continuous progresses made by the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) industry and understanding the enormous possibilities that these progresses would allow in terms of networking infrastructures and services, to consider and deal with ICT not only as a particular economic activity among others but mainly as an economic and technologic platform to be used for all human activities involving stakeholders as well as individuals".

I really believe that any additional comment would make the Declaration of Principles longer than what is required for a document to be signed by Heads of State.

B- With respect to the common vision on the **Global Information Society**, I would propose you to adopt the following wording:

“By nature, the GIS is the society where all peoples of the world shall appear as representing together a unique community and where each individual shall be able, looking beyond his particular identity, to feel that he is part of this unique community. It is obvious that the GIS is probably not going to scratch all the imperfections, the contradictions and the multiple divides that characterize our world since millenniums. However, building the GIS represents the first opportunity given to the international community to imagine and prepare as a whole its own future, which should help at least to narrow those imperfections, contradictions, and divides. For this reason, the building of the GIS should not develop only according to its proper auto-dynamism, without agreement on a universal vision and understanding of what it is and to what direction it should be oriented, unless the world would take the risk to face a situation where these imperfections, contradictions and divides are going to be enforced to an extent where the peaceful coexistence between peoples, where their national security as well as the fundamental rights of individuals would be dangerously threatened”.

"There is a need to build the Global Information Society under a Human Rights perspective, meaning a GIS which would develop while respecting, preserving and enforcing the fundamental human rights. This would be possible only when all the stakeholders (governments, business entities, international organisations and entities of the Civil Society) as well as the individuals, shall be committed to promote the development and the use of the Information and Communication technologies and services:

- In a manner that secures the fair, balanced and harmonious development of all the peoples of the world with particular attention to the needs and expectations of the developing countries and in each country, to those of the most disadvantaged communities such as: women, youth, inhabitants of remote or rural or desert areas, disabled, indigenous
- While respecting, preserving and enforcing by all possible legal, technical and regulatory means the religious, cultural and linguistic identities and patrimonies of the various peoples of the world, accepting their diversity with a spirit of tolerance
- While adopting at the national level, laws, rules and regulation that enforce the individual freedom and that punish all kinds of action, activity or behaviour that would represent an attempt to this individual freedom
- While adopting a framework for international cooperation based on a spirit of real and sincere solidarity aiming to enable developing countries to benefit from adequate means to achieve an harmonious social integration and economic development noting that such a result is the most important factor that could ensure to all peoples of the world security, peace and stability”.

Mister Chairman, this wording for the Common Vision has the merit to address the issue of bridging the Domestic Digital Divide as well as the issue of bridging the Digital Divide existing between poor countries and other countries (Bullets 1 and 4). It also answers the concerns raised in number of countries by anarchic and unregulated "globalization" (Bullet 2) as well as the concerns related to security, peace, stability and freedom (Bullet 3). Finally, it prepares the field for concrete development-oriented decisions that the Summit is supposed to take.

C- With respect to the **key-principles**, I would propose that governmental delegations that are going to discuss on this item take into deep consideration the following proposals:

1. ICT as a tool for Development: Being a horizontal platform for economic development and a tool for social integration, information and communication

infrastructures and services must be, without delay, extensively deployed and used in all developing countries in order to achieve the *UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG)* in particular to help in promoting a sustainable development and in eradicating poverty

2. Ethical Dimension of the use of ICT:
 - a. Role of Governments
 - b. Role of NGOs and Civil Society
3. Right to Information and Right to Communicate: The right to information and knowledge as well as the right to communicate are recognized as being fundamental human rights and should be so added to the list of Fundamental Human Rights (UN Charter-Human Rights Charter). There is no GIS unless everyone, everywhere is not granted the opportunity and the capacity to access an Information or a Communication network. This is what is meant by universal access.
4. Pre-requisites: There are fundamental pre-requisites for building the GIS:
 - a. Adoption of national legal frameworks and regulatory policies that should be pro-competitive with the aim to attract investments in all the various segments that comprise the Information Society and identification and elimination of all obstacles that delay or halt economic growth
 - b. Adoption of good-governance procedures at all levels which supposes transparency, accountability, sustainability, predictability and generalization of administrative reforms aiming to bring governments being e-Model Users
 - c. Adoption of national ICT strategies involving at all levels the development partners, in particular business entities
 - d. Recognition of the multi-stakeholders partnerships framework as being the key-framework for the launching of ICT-development programs and recognition of the leading role of the business sector, in particular local SMEs with respect to the management of these programs
5. Gender Perspective: Building the GIS shall not be possible if all stakeholders (governments, business entities, NGOs and Civil Society, international organizations) fail in incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of actions they have the responsibility to undertake and manage
6. Transfer of ICT Technologies: Building the GIS shall not be possible while unilateral regulatory decisions, based on political considerations and aiming to prevent countries from access to ICT technologies, would prevail
7. Benefits of the Information Society: The benefits of the GIS are myriad and interrelated covering social, cultural, educational, economic, administrative activities of stakeholders as well as of individuals and they ultimately impact the life of individuals whether directly or indirectly
8. Human Resources Development: Developing countries cannot enter the GIS without strengthening their human, institutional and organizational capacities and without increasing awareness for production of local ICT contents and use of local languages for ICT through:
 - a. Capacity-building and training programs

b. Knowledge and expertise transfer

With this list of principles, Mister Chairman, the Declaration of Principles would be completed. When Mrs. Shope Mafale Working Group would be tasked by SubCommittee2 to engage discussion about the Draft-Action Plan, I would be happy to provide the Secretariat with the last document that I have mentioned previously and which is dealing with:

- The list of issues
- The objectives
- Strategies, programs and methods for implementation and with some ideas related to the follow-up work to be undertaken between GENEVA and TUNIS phases.

With that, I would like to wish you all success in your work and I would ensure you that the Arab Business Community shall increase its strong mobilization, in backing of our Heads of State, to deliver the Summit with a clear and strong message that we are ready in our region, to fulfill our obligations towards the future generations.

Thank You.

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