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STATEMENT BY
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Honorable Minister of Communications
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

The global info telecommunications industry has undergone profound changes during recent years. Continued rapid growth of the Internet, and the creation and development of applications attached to its use has resulted in a corresponding increase in IP access and in IP backbone networks. We see the Internet as the future, one that will shape how the Information Society and indeed our society would look like.

In Brunei, we have installed an extensive broadband backbone optical network covering the whole country. A number of e-projects are also being implemented. The Government through its Public Services Vision 21 has been making concerted efforts to reinvent the public sector through the adoption of ICT-driven processes and to move it up the value chain. To support this initiative, the government has committed B\$1 billion or around Euro 0.5 billion to mobilize e-government applications and services.

Meanwhile, our education system is also undergoing a learning revolution to further strengthen human-capacity building. In this respect, efforts to provide a holistic education towards the production of quality human resources equipped with relevant skills in ICT have been supported by generous budgetary allocations. The average State budget for education is between 12% to 13%. Brunei has 93.7% literacy rate.

Almost all government primary and secondary schools have been equipped with computer hardware and software. ICT competencies training for teachers and administrators and training course for teachers and officers have been introduced as school curriculum. Soon, all schools will be connected to the Internet and will have access to the wealth of information in the world wide web.

To address the issues on Internet and IT use in general, a number of necessary related laws have also been enacted.

In working towards creating an information society, we see an urgent need to address some important issues which are of great concern to us. There are three as follows:

- Positive use of the Internet

It is an undeniable fact that the Internet holds a strong appeal to youths including students, whose resilience need to be strengthened against any negative contents they may find on the Internet, such as online gambling.

- Second is International Charging Arrangement for Internet Connection.

The current costly arrangement means that our Internet Service Providers would have to run their businesses at a high fixed operating cost, which is in turn translated to higher charges to the Consumers. Being a small country, a sustainable international charging model will help narrow the digital divide. We see this issue as the equivalence of Universal Service Obligation but on a global scale.

- Third is Network Security.

Security breaches may cost Governments or companies huge amounts in lost opportunities or productivity, so both Government and industry sectors need to adopt a more pro-active attitude towards IT security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a sign of ASEAN solidarity, ASEAN has submitted 'An ASEAN Joint Statement to this World Summit On Information Society' to associate ourselves with the efforts to address the global challenge in this millennium – that of building the information society and the strong desire to contribute positively and to share relevant experiences among member states. ASEAN hopes that the World Summit on Information Society would enable countries to begin their integration into the global infocomm community.

Progressing from Phase 1 in Geneva to the next phase in Tunis, ASEAN is of the view that the process of a global information society should be grounded upon the following guiding principles:

- *The global strategy to realize the Information Society must be based on concrete milestones rather than broad visions*
- *The plan of Action should be adapted to each region's unique and diverseneeds and*
- *Existing regional initiatives such as e-ASEAN should be leveraged upon when implementing programmes.*

We also believe that the establishment of a true 'Information Society' in which people benefit from it without discrimination requires broad collaboration and cooperation and we are convinced this can be achieved as demonstrated by the e-ASEAN initiative.

Thank You.