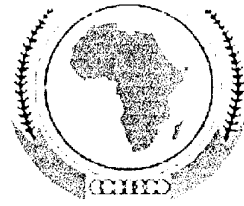




Republic of Mozambique



African Union

**MESSAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY
JOAQUIM ALBERTO CHISSANO,
*PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
MOZAMBIQUE*
*AND CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN
UNION,*
TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE
INFORMATION SOCIETY**

(Geneva, 10 December 2003)

Your Excellency Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation and Chairperson of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with a great sense of honour and privilege that I take the floor before such an august audience in this unique event, the World Summit on the Information Society. Allow me to convey to you the greetings of the people and the Government of Mozambique.

I feel privileged, in my capacity as the Chairperson of the African Union, to extend to you the warmest greetings of the African Continent.

I would like to express my words of sincere appreciation to His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I also extend my greetings to the President of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

We are gathering here today to craft a common vision for the Information Society, and to seek for ways and means to narrow the digital divide, an important step to reduce poverty through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

I strongly believe, based on the experience of Mozambique, that ICTs are indispensable tools for economic, social and political development. In my country, as well as in most of the

developing countries, information society cannot be established without basic ICT infrastructure and skilled human resources. Therefore developed and developing nations must come together to make the Information Society a reality for all. The ICTs are the vehicle that will let information flow freely, allowing ideas and knowledge to be shared as a basic human right.

In Mozambique we are committed to build an Information Society. My Government has established a high level task force on ICT composed by government, business as well as civil society leaders. The ICT Policy and its implementation Strategy are the roadmap to the creation of the Information Society in Mozambique. The global economy requires the countries to develop abilities to use efficiently the ICTs as a way to improve their competitiveness.

Even though we are a poor country, we have gone beyond the dilemma of having to choose between ICTs and other development imperatives. ICTs, today, are the enablers and engines of spurring development in all sectors.

Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is the vehicle to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), seeks to use the ICTs to accelerate economic growth and development. Through NEPAD we are fostering intra-regional trade for the attainment of the goals of an African common market.

ICTs play an important role in data collection and processing which are key for the review of the political, economic and corporate governance at the national level, as well as at regional

and continental in the context of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The African Peer Review Mechanism constitutes a process whereby peers ensure that the policies and practices of the participating States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards, and achieve mutually agreed objectives in socio-economic development contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance.

The World Summit on the Information Society offers a new window of opportunity to the world, especially to the African peoples to accelerate the human development.

Africa's vision of the new Information Society is one that leads to the knowledge society, where the issues of language, education, literacy, dialogue of cultures and civilizations, and human development take center stage. To make this vision a reality, a strong leadership is needed as well as a public-private partnership that brings together all stakeholders – Government, civil society, businesses, and the international community.

The adoption of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action before us will provide a guide and a monitoring tool to judge our success in building an information society towards a knowledge led development.

Africa calls upon all development partners to come forward and lend their unequivocal support in building an Information Society that is inclusive. We call upon all our bilateral and multilateral partners, governments and development agencies, private companies, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders to join hands with us, in Mozambique and in the African continent, and

open a new chapter in the North-South and South-South cooperation.

The success of the Information Society will be judged by the degree of improvement and progress of ICTs as an important tool for the sustainable development of human kind.

The Information Society would not be complete if cultural expressions such as music, singing, dancing, performing arts were not included. They are actively used in Africa to transfer information and knowledge, including combat of endemic diseases HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. They also convey messages of peace, solidarity and tolerance.

Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by calling on the Summit to take this unique opportunity to adopt the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action that will open the way to the future development of a true knowledge society.

I thank you!