Tunis Phase of WSIS – Political Chapeau

1.   We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, have gathered in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005 for this second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to reiterate our unequivocal support for the *Declaration of Principles* and *Plan of Action* adopted at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003, and reaffirm our commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression, so that people everywhere can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life.

2.   We recognize

a. that knowledge is vital to human existence, that information is an essential ingredient in the generation of knowledge, and that wider dissemination and diffusion of knowledge would contribute to foster education, scientific advancement, public health, environmental protection and the development of developing countries;

b. that the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) presents unparalleled opportunities for sharing information, fostering the growth of knowledge, and increasing human welfare;

c. that ICTs have made it possible for a vastly larger population than at any time in the past to join in sharing and expanding the base of human knowledge, and contributing to its further growth, and that they have the potential to unlock human creativity and inventiveness in ways that could not have been imagined before;

d. that ICTs have enormous potential to expand access to quality education, to boost literacy and universal primary education, and to facilitate the leaning process itself - and thus lay the groundwork for a fully inclusive information and knowledge society;

e. that the Internet, as a global storehouse of knowledge and information, should be universally accessible, and that affordable connectivity for schools, other learning institutions and libraries in all countries would enable people everywhere, both children and adults, to have access to quality educational tools and material;

f. that ICTs, by making possible the creation and distribution of knowledge in new and innovative ways, and by enabling efficiency gains and increased productivity, can act as important accelerators of economic, social and cultural development, and help developing countries reach the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;

g. that ICTs have greatly expanded our ability to protect and preserve our cultural heritage, which is a crucial component of identity, and that they have provided us with valuable tools for retrieving and restoring cultural treasures and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity;

h. that the development of local content suited to domestic or regional needs, and the use of local languages in such content, will encourage social and economic development and will stimulate participation of all stakeholders, including people living in rural, remote and marginalized areas;

i. that ICTs could facilitate access to governmental information and services; serve as a catalyst for better governance, greater accountability and increased transparency; give a stronger voice to the disadvantaged, the marginalized and the vulnerable; and, empower people by enabling them more effectively to participate in democratic processes and in decision making affecting their lives;

j. that a global culture of cyber-security needs to be promoted, developed and implemented in cooperation with all stakeholders and international expert bodies, and that it is necessary to prevent the abuse of information resources and technologies for criminal and terrorist purposes; and

k. that all actors in the Information Society should take appropriate actions and preventive measures, as determined by law, against abusive uses of ICTs, such as illegal and other acts motivated by racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, hatred, violence, all forms of child abuse, including paedophilia and child pornography, and trafficking in, and exploitation of, human beings.

3.   **We also recognize** that just as the ICT revolution can have a tremendous positive impact as an instrument of social and economic development, in the absence of enlightened national and international policies and an appropriate enabling environment, it could reinforce and increase existing social and economic divisions, and widen the gap between rich and poor countries, between regions, and between individuals - including between men and women.

4.   **We are convinced** that our goals can be accomplished only through the involvement and partnership of all stakeholders of the Information Society, including governments, international organizations, businesses and civil society, and that international cooperation at all levels is indispensable if the fruits of the Information Society are to be shared equitably by all.

5.   **We shall strive unremittingly**, therefore, to promote equitable access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) for people everywhere, to ensure that the benefits are more evenly distributed between and within societies, and to bridge the digital divide in order to create digital opportunities for all.

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