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**WSIS +10 High Level Policy Statement**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

A decade ago the global community met to address the phenomenal rise of information and communication technologies and their role in the creation of an inclusive Information and Knowledge Society, firstly in 2003 (in Geneva) and then in 2005 (in Tunis) in the two-phased World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). While Trinidad and Tobago was an active participant in both phases of WSIS, it could be argued that the development of the national information and communication technology agenda was at a very nascent stage of development. Yet, even then, we recognised that we were in a new era, the Information Age, characterised by rapid and continuous change. This era was one in which the swift advancement of technology was already charting a new, perhaps even revolutionary, course of human development. Thus, we answered the call to join the international community in addressing this growing phenomenon which held the potential to contribute meaningfully to achieving internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). And which by extension, would also impact national development objectives. As such, for the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, WSIS was a seminal undertaking and the ensuing Outcome Documents provided a set of commitments which went beyond mere rhetoric.

Rather, through the Action Lines, these documents offered a framework for pivotal areas of activity that would build on the enabling capacity of ICT. They also provided a basis for collaboration among key stakeholders aimed at generating far-reaching developments in diverse areas such as education, health, public services provision and disaster mitigation. Given the overarching objective of improving the lives of the world’s citizens, particularly the most vulnerable among them; these objectives were closely aligned with the MDGs.

While we might have been skeptical about the role of ICT and the Internet, some ten years on it is now evident that they are critical components of the process of globalization. Trinidad and Tobago like many other countries, is being impacted by the exceptional growth of technology on the one hand, and on the other, the ever increasing value of information and knowledge. In response and with a view to ensuring that the country can derive the fullest benefits from these developments, the National Development Strategy has identified the innovative use and development of ICTs as critical undertakings in establishing a more diversified economy predicated on the country’s continuing integration into the global information and knowledge society. As such, ICT is the fourth of seven development pillars comprising the national development strategy of which the other pillars are:

Pillar 1: People-Centred Development

Pillar 2: Poverty Eradication and Social Justice

Pillar 3: National and Personal Security

Pillar 5: A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy

Pillar 6: Good Governance

Pillar 7: Foreign Policy

Further, in the context of this Development Strategy, a National ICT Plan called smarTT has been elaborated for the period 2014 to 2018, informed by the view that ICTs can assist in developing cogent responses to the demands of the 21st Century at the economic, social and political level. It also recognizes the significance of ICT as a catalyst in building the country’s innovative capacity and improving economic competitiveness. Trinidad and Tobago is a small state, moreover it is designated a small island developing state (SIDS) owing to the inherent vulnerabilities which are characteristic of all states within this grouping.

Yet, our objectives in harnessing the potential of ICT are no different from those of many other countries, developing, developed or landlocked. To this end, the country is pursuing strategies that can result in the realisation of discrete national development goals such as poverty eradication, job creation, the development of a highly skilled workforce, improved personal security and safety, enhanced living standards and environmental protection. Such achievements at the national level will in turn contribute to the global composite that will need to be assessed in determining whether international development goals are being achieved.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges and commends the critical work undertaken by all stakeholders in keeping with their recognized roles and responsibilities and notes that the WSIS Framework identified the key principles that would have to be adhered to in developing the Information and Knowledge Society including equity, diversity, inclusivity, universal access and non-discrimination. While much has been achieved, more still needs to be done. We have reached a crossroads of sorts but it is not to determine whether ICTs can serve as a catalyst for development since there is almost universal agreement on their transformative potential. Rather, there is a need to determine how in the post-2015 Development period, the benefits to be derived from ICTs can be as ubiquitous as the technology itself, while ensuring that the continuation of the significant international cooperation and collaboration that has characterized the WSIS process.

Trinidad and Tobago views this event as opportune in providing a forum through which we can seek to energise and re-focus efforts in bridging the digital divide within and among countries. Even as countries seek to rebound from the impact of the global economic downturn, we cannot lose sight of the transformational power of ICT in realizing the digital dividend that can redound to the benefits of our citizens.

In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago suggests the following to be incorporated into the post 2015 WSIS agenda:

1. **Pursuit of more direct linkages between the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and the post-2015 WSIS agenda.**

Target 8 of the MDGs noted the importance of special assistance to Least Developed Countries, Landlocked countries and SIDS and also advocated enhanced cooperation as a means of making the benefits of technology, including ICTs available to all. While such assistance remains very relevant, the cross-cutting impact of ICTs must also be acknowledged. Trinidad and Tobago supports the establishment of direct linkages between the post 2015 WSIS Agenda and the targets of the post 2015 sustainable development agenda as well as the existing MDGs targets. This in our view will clearly identify ICT’s enabling role for inclusive development across all sectors and all spheres of human activity in keeping with the three primary pillars of sustainable development, namely economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

1. **Address the development of Mobile Broadband Technology** **in** **Developing Countries**

It is noted that mobile broadband is the fastest growing technology in human history and its evolution is providing the basis for successfully bridging the digital divide between the connected and the unconnected, within and among countries. There is a strong correlation between investment in broadband deployment and economic development. With mobile broadband subscriptions now surpassing fixed broadband worldwide, the opportunities for generating new efficiencies and economies of scale, if combined with requisite organizational changes, cannot and should not be ignored. This is a factor that Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to address in the rollout of its National Broadband Plan which comprises a component of the National ICT Plan, smarTT.

1. **Enhance coordination among various actors, including regional and international organizations, in developing and implementing Cyber Security (and cybercrime) Strategies and Policies**

A corollary to the many opportunities brought about by ICTs and the Internet is the presence of risks and threats in cyberspace. These threats are evolving almost at the same rate as the technology itself. This call recognizes WSIS Action Line C5 and Resolution 130 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010), both of which underscore the importance of building safety and confidence in the use of ICTs. Trinidad and Tobago advocates the establishment of formal mechanisms that will lessen or avoid duplication among the workstreams of the organizations which provide technical assistance and active coordination in the area of Cyber Security and cybercrime. For Trinidad and Tobago, cyber security is part of the enabling framework for ICT, and the creation of a secure digital environment will facilitate those actions and activities that can contribute to ICT growth and development. Furthermore, given the pervasive and borderless nature of criminal activity in cyberspace, regional coherence and collaboration will also ensure a more balanced treatment of the issues within and across regions.

1. **The fourth and final suggestion is enhanced capacity building to facilitate active participation in ICT public policy decision-making forums**

Public Policy related aspects of ICT and the Internet are being discussed on an ongoing basis in various forums. However, small states in particular are either un-represented or under-represented at these decision-making meeting, decisions which can have far-reaching consequences for their individual development. While ICTs have assisted in the development and offer of distance learning courses, these are often disconnected from the diverse areas in which public policy is addressed. Similarly, remote participation has served as a useful tool but there have been shortcomings in facilitating the meaningful participation of small states.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.