

**SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**

**STATEMENT BY SENATOR THE HONOURABLE LYNETTE  
EASTMOND  
MINISTER OF COMMERCE  
CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
BARBADOS  
NOVEMBER 18, 2005**

Thank you, Mr. President,

First of all, I wish on behalf of the Barbados Delegation, to express our appreciation and gratitude to the government and people of Tunisia for the excellent facilities which they have placed at our disposal and for the generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Tunisia. I would also like to congratulate the organizers of this event for putting on a very successful Summit.

I must point out that Barbados attached the greatest importance to the World Summit on the Information Society process from the very beginning when the idea was raised at the International Telecommunication Union Plenipotentiary Conference in 1998. In spite of our limited resources, we sought to participate in the various proceedings in recognition of the potential of Information and Communication Technologies to transform economies and facilitate meaningful participation in the global economy.

In many of the studies conducted by international organisations that seek to make recommendations for the development of small states and developing countries, there is one underlying theme. That theme is that ICTs, properly harnessed, can revolutionise societies, businesses and economies, all for the good of the country.

Having accepted this thesis, it is now most important for small and developing countries like Barbados to ensure that international governance rules for this great leveller are not now formulated in the interest of any one group of Nations.

That is why it is so important for the international community to take special action to ensure that all countries can participate in the benefits of the Information Society, irrespective of their economic circumstances and geographic location.

We believe that it is timely to remind ourselves of our lofty commitments to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

Let us not ever lose sight of those principles in our efforts to find solutions to the problems confronting the development of mankind.

I wish to re-enforce the point that ICTs have the potential to help us to develop our economies and to improve the quality of life of our people. But there is a real danger that the progress of some

societies could be retarded as a consequence of lack of access or only very limited access to the new technologies.

In this respect, the Government of Barbados has been taking a number of initiatives to help ensure that Barbados does not miss out on the opportunity to become an active member of the Information Society.

We have liberalised our telecommunications sector and this action has created immediate benefits to Barbadian consumers in the form of lower prices, greater choice in the form of service offerings and enhancement in the quality of service.

We have embarked on a programme of legislative reform to provide a more favourable environment for the development of Information and Communication Technologies.

In this connection, we have enacted an Electronic Transactions Act which, among other things, provides individuals and businesses with an opportunity to exercise choice by creating equivalency between electronic documents and paper-based documents.

We have also enacted consumer protection legislation to ensure that consumers are given certain basic rights, whether conducting business in a face to face situation or whether through distance selling means, and that these rights can be properly safeguarded.

Additionally, we have enacted a Computer Misuse Act to curb the mis-use or abuse of computer systems. We are also preparing a Data Protection Act and a Freedom of Information Act.

I note with deep interest that several Countries have been stressing the importance of building capacity. Barbados is ever-conscious of this need and so, through a Community Technology Programme, it is providing training in ICTs for thousands of Barbadians in their own communities, at times convenient to them. This is but one step in our efforts to promote a culture of entrepreneurship, whereby as many persons as possible will be encouraged to use their newly acquired skills to generate income for themselves and their families.

It has also been most encouraging to see young children as well as senior citizens participating actively in this programme, particularly those persons who might not otherwise have been able to access the technology.

Mr. President, in the spirit of the Geneva Plan of Action, we are in the final stages of preparing a national strategy to assist us in making full use of ICTs for stimulating national development.

Barbados is committed to the most efficient use of ICTs in every aspect of economic and social development of the country as well as the Caribbean Community region as we engage in the development of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. In so doing, we believe that the technology issues are secondary to the human problems of organizational structure and business process change that will be necessary to maximize the effectiveness of our investment in technology.

On the issue of financing, Mr. President, I believe very strongly that the International Community needs to do more to improve access by developing countries, in order to support development initiatives in the area of ICTs.

Again, we wish to underscore the importance we attach to the commitment made by developed countries in the Monterrey Consensus, and other fora, to provide 0.7% of their Gross National Product in the form of Official Development Assistance.

As we look to the future, I believe that more than ever, we must be prepared to work together in this common cause. Indeed, as we renew our commitment to realizing the Millennium Development goals and to fight the ills of this world such as hunger and malnutrition, poverty in all its forms and reduce the effects of natural disasters, we should seek to exploit the virtues of ICTs to enhance our actions.

Mr. President, we wish to commend the efforts of all those persons who participated in the preparatory process for the Summit and especially the dialogue on Internet governance. Additionally, we wish to compliment all those who worked so tirelessly to make the Internet what it is today. For the Internet is clearly an international resource which we must all ensure that we safeguard.

The World Summit on the Information Society process has been instructive for us all and we have gained much from the dialogue and expanded participation of the business community and civil society. Similarly, we have all gained from an appreciation of our cultural differences and diverse national considerations. No matter how strong our differences were at times, our fundamental common interests of humanity for improvement for all mankind allowed us to reach consensus on the thorniest issues.

We are satisfied that all those who believe in multilateralism, transparency and democracy will find that the proposed forum for Internet governance will provide an indispensable and desirable space for dialogue such that we can better cope with any new and unforeseen challenges.

Let us recommit to building a knowledge-based, all-inclusive Information Society where all States can have a reasonable opportunity to share in the benefits of development and a real opportunity to improve the quality of life of their people.

I thank you.