

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

Dr. Margarita Cedeño de Fernández
First Lady of the Dominican Republic

On behalf of the Dominican Republic, my husband, President Leonel Fernández Reyna and myself, I wish to thank you for the warm welcome we have received from the people of Tunisia and His Excellency, President Ben Ali. We also wish to thank the Honorable Kofi Annan and the Honorable Yosio Utsumi, for hosting this important second phase of the World Information Society Summit that opens new opportunities for developing and less advanced nations to solidify their intent to develop and expand the use of information and communications technologies as they face the challenge of transforming the inequality and social exclusion resulting from the Digital Divide into a Digital Opportunity.

Our country, embracing the vision of President Fernández, has decided to build a society based on information and knowledge, whose main goal is sustainable human development as a new paradigm for social, economic and technological development. Along this premise, the Dominican Republic has implemented a National Strategy for this purpose called E-Dominicana, setting the essential institutional framework with the creation of a National Commission for the Creation of an Information Society (Comisión Nacional para la creación de una sociedad de la información, CNSIC,) that is participatory and inclusive in its quest for a better future.

We firmly believe, that a true information society must be anchored on a national development plan that is based on three key pillars: Capacity-building to effectively exercise their rights, achieve Sustained Economic growth and promote Equality and Social Inclusion.”

This is the global challenge of the new millennium. Thereby, we must be firm in our decision to ensure that all our citizens, both men and women, may benefit from the opportunities the new technologies can bring. The Governments, the private sector, the civil society and international organizations have an important duty and responsibility for the development of the Information and Communication Society, which assumes a joint effort that needs the cooperation and partnership of

all the stakeholders, and above all, we must have the will to honor the commitments we have made in this Summit.

For less favored nations, like ours, the advantages of an Information Society are an invaluable support to strengthen the cognitive and competitive skills and capacities, both individual and collective, that will allow us to harness better opportunities to achieve sustained growth with wellness and progress.

The Dominican Government, aware that poverty and social inequality are not only the result of absence of revenues, but also, the absence of opportunities for developing the capacities and potential of our people, has initiated a series of programs where Information and Communications Technology plays a vital role, since it has demonstrated to be a tool for scientific, economic and social development of nations, saving time and bridging the distance from the rest of the world and universal knowledge.

This is why the Dominican Government has initiated an extensive program aimed at reducing the Digital Divide. The Office of the First Lady has been entrusted with the task of making technology work for the people in the most destitute areas by forming Community Technology Centers, that will serve as means of social inclusion by providing training in the use of ICTs for development, projects to increase access and connectivity, the installation of the Caribbean NAPs, the development of an E-Government infrastructure, continuous updating of the educational actors, promoting the use of E-commerce tools and incentives for the development of ICT-intensive businesses.

We are firmly convinced, that to promote an information society, it is essential to create an enabling environment, domestically and globally, that is why, this Summit is a historical step for our countries, because it provides a tangible and viable opportunity to use ICTs to ensure achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The results of the Summit are, unquestionably, an important step for our countries in their processes of integration, to reduce the Digital Divide and towards their insertion into the Information Society. Therefore, we are extremely pleased by the creation of the Internet Governance Forum and consider the commitment in the Declaration of Principles of the WSIS adopted in Geneva a core element that guarantees cross-sectional participation, transparency and the other key principles which we steadfastly hold true.

Likewise, we are very pleased the world has understood that the significance of the Internet lies not in the technological platform that supports it but in the new social and economic relations that surround and result from it, that is, the changes in the social fabric and all the areas that have emerged from such technological pursuits.

Our country is fully convinced that we are, collectively, entering into a new era that offers vast possibilities, therefore we reiterate our commitment to be an active part of these processes, we will contribute the experience, work and collaboration of a visionary government and a friendly country that truly and fervently believes that through the opportunities resulting from Information and Communications Technologies, and our work together, we can build a real information society for the development of our people and the prosperity of our people.

Thank you.