

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY H. E. DR. TAREK KAMEL, MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ARABIC REPUBLIC OF EGYPT 17 NOVEMBER 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Heads of States and Governments, Ladies and
Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Egyptian government and people, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the UN, the ITU, as well as the Tunisian and Swiss governments for their efforts in organizing the two phases of the WSIS. A summit that has contributed effectively in building the information society on the local and international levels.

Our gathering here today, at the second phase of the WSIS, two years after phase one, reflects our increasing commitment to the success of the summit. In addition, it confirms the increasing determination of the international community to formulate a clearer and more balanced collective vision to maximize the benefit from the ICT revolution for the achievement of the development goals of all societies: industrial, developing, rich, poor, large and small.

There is no doubt that the effects of the ICT revolution should not be confined to economic and developmental benefits only, but should extend to strengthening political, social and cultural ties between nations. ICT should be employed in realizing world peace based on justice, equality and a respect of sovereignty within a framework that honors national identity and preserves religious and cultural diversity. Respect for such diversity is a fundamental component of cooperation and integration between civilizations. This approach undoubtedly confirms the concept of a global information society and allows the opportunity for all nations to effectively participate in creating and using ICT as a tool in exercising their right to development.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In light of its regional and international commitments, Egypt has diligently and persistently been involved in all preparatory stages of the WSIS. A high-level Arab conference was held in Cairo from May 8th to 10th, 2005 providing a forum for an Arab, African, and international dialogue. Egypt has also been actively involved in updating the Arab and African Plans of Action for this phase in accordance with new developments that took place on the regional and international levels since the first phase of the summit.

The first phase of the WSIS resulted in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action. The two documents addressed all the effective components of a modern society and laid the

foundations for the establishment of the information society.

I would therefore like to seize the opportunity presented by this esteemed assembly to brief you on Egypt's position on some of the most important issues of this phase.

Concerning Internet Governance,

I would like to join those who preceded me in thanking the WGIG and praise the efforts of the UN Secretary General and his special representative. These efforts were reflected in the working group's report, in which Egypt had the honor of participating.

Egypt sees internet governance as a continuous dialogue. This stems from our realization that the internet is no longer a mere means of exchanging information or an e-content depository, but rather has evolved in the framework of convergence between telecommunications and media, as a tool for development capable of affecting all aspects of life. This necessitates the development of the mechanisms that govern the internet, the most important of which is greater international participation to encourage multilingualism on the net.

On the technological and administrative levels, Egypt realizes the importance of the stability of internet resources, and maximizing the benefits of the technological and economic expertise that already exists in this respect. Egypt supports the establishment of the new internet governance forum as a mechanism for dialogue and coordination that sets general policies for the net and plays a coordinating role between the different stakeholders. In order to develop and grow the net, the forum should include all stakeholders from governments, to civil society and private sector from developed and developing nations.

Concerning financial mechanisms,

I am certain that you agree that this issue has great repercussions on the information society planning process. In seeking new funding mechanisms, Egypt has suggested the "debt- swap" as a means for both paying off the outstanding debts owed by many developing countries while financing projects and programs as outlined in the Plan of Action. A debt-swap converts debts into development projects that benefit both creditor and debtor. Egypt has taken active steps in this area where we created a special fund to implement development projects using ICT, funded through the debt swap mechanism.

Concerning Follow-up and implementation of the WSIS,

The importance of this issue arises from the necessity of implementing the outcomes of this summit, in fact, it is an integral part of the process. Egypt welcomes the ongoing international dialogue and suggestions made by governments and different international organizations that all aim to come up with a practical mechanism for follow-up and implementation.

In this respect, we support the suggestion to assign the UN organs concerned with follow-up mechanisms, given that implementation is carried out by relevant international organizations. We emphasize the importance of the flexibility of such mechanism to achieve the desired to bridge the digital divide. We also emphasize the importance of the relevant specialized agencies that took the lead in making this summit a success.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Egypt had a strong presence in the first phase of the summit in December 2003, when President Hosny Mubarak announced the Egyptian Information Society Initiative. In this respect I would like

to stress that Egypt has successfully implemented a number of leading national initiatives that other countries can also benefit from. These include the technology incubators for small and medium enterprises, enabling women in the ICT sector, smart schools, e-government, and cultural heritage documentation. The Smart Village was established to serve as the basis for a technology based businesses in Egypt and the region with the aim of exporting services and expertise.

The establishment of an information society requires us to abide by a number of policies and directives, the most important of which is the deregulation of services and the restructuring of the information and communications sector while promulgating the necessary legislation. The implementation of these policies in Egypt has so far led to a surge in new communications services by more than 20% per annum, and yet there still remains ahead of us a need to enhance the role of civil society organizations in protecting consumers and increasing technology awareness while restructuring and organizing the sector.

I would like to stress that investing in research and development tools is the basis for innovation, creativity and maximizing the value added to society. In this context, it is our pleasure to present the results of our experiences in partnering with international companies to develop skills and invest in resources and value added products for regional benefit.

I'm sure you share with me the opinion that the development of an information society and the generation of knowledge, within the framework of comprehensive human resource development, require effort in the implementation of policies that aim to eradicate e-illiteracy and raise most citizens' basic information technology skills.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We hold our summit today in the Arab African city of Tunis overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, which has witnessed the interaction of many civilizations and cultures over time. The Mediterranean has an opportunity to become the world's first "electronic sea", upon whose waves bridges of cooperation on information and communications technology can be built between north and south. Egypt is prepared to support this cooperation, and this will be reflected in our future activities that will work towards enhancing north-south and south-south cooperation.

As the second and final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society is about to conclude, this represents to Egypt the beginning of a new phase in the building the information society and a great opportunity to build more bridges of cooperation with different nations of the world. Egypt will continue with its national, regional, and global efforts to follow up on the implementation of the agreements made at both phases of the summit. The Egyptian government will continue working towards building a national information society and connecting it to the international information society via cooperation between all parties involved, locally, regionally, and internationally.

I wish you all the best of luck and success, and would once again like to thank the organizers of the summit.

Thank you.