

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS
STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. TEFERA WALWA,
MINISTER OF CAPACITY BUILDING

THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

Mr. President
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to express that Ethiopia is proud of Tunisia to host and make this event successful. Mr. President, please allow me also to express my appreciation to the WSIS Executive Secretariat and to all others for their relentless efforts.

Recognizing the importance of building an inclusive, development-oriented and people centered information society guided by the motto "we are too poor not to invest on ICT", the endeavor Ethiopia has made so far in establishing ICT infrastructure for increased access to ICT services and embarking on ICT-enabled sectoral applications indicates that Ethiopia is favorably responding towards the realization of WSIS principles and plan of actions.

Mr. President,

During the first Summit, Ethiopia asserted its commitment to harnessing ICTs for development and democratization, particularly for capacity building and transforming delivery of public services. In this respect, a lot has been achieved. To mention few, Ethiopia managed to build an internationally competitive telecom infrastructure equipped with high-speed broadband technology. The installation of fiber optics network covering about 4000 kilometers in the directions of the major network routes in the country. A rural connectivity program is also well underway with the target of connecting more than 15,000 villages and providing them with access to ICTs within the range of 5 to 10 kilometers walking distance from anywhere in the country by the end of 2008.

Today, all existing secondary schools are connected and receiving educational contents through satellite TV using VSAT broadband technology. Interconnecting agricultural research centers is another important connectivity initiative to support national agricultural activities. The application of ICTs to enhance development spans to empower all 600 districts of the country, reaching more than 80% of our population living in rural areas.

The Federal Supreme Court is using ICTs in examining files and documents on-line as well as hearing court appeals from remote places over videoconferencing facilities.

Mr. President,

My country's expectation in the implementation mechanisms of the WSIS is that the recognition, acknowledgement and recommendations on the need for knowledge, skills and financial resources must be transformed into practical commitment and concrete partnerships. Ethiopia would like to reconfirm its commitment to work together with all stakeholders towards the implementation of the decisions and follow up activities coming out of this Summit.

Ethiopia also recognizes that innovative public financing and private investment on ICT play an important role in expanding access to ICT services in rural and under-served areas. In this regard, we appreciate the successful launching of Digital Solidarity Fund and others partners in developing Digital Solidarity Mechanism for mobilizing resources to finance and promote digital inclusion endeavors.

Ethiopia considers Internet as a crucial vehicle for the evolvement of an inclusive information society and has been heavily investing on it. However, ensuring accessibility is a challenge to make it widely affordable. Such challenge partly calls for measures like decreasing costs related to interconnectivity. Ethiopia anxiously looks forward towards appropriate mechanisms of Internet Governance.

Mr. President,

Finally, let me take this opportunity to inform this assembly that the Government of Ethiopia will be hosting the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR), from 22-26 August 2007, in collaboration with the International Federation for Information Processing. This forum will definitely contribute to reviewing the progress of the implementation of WSIS targets and learn from best practices. On behalf of the government of Ethiopia and its people, I would like to cordially invite you all to this important event.

I thank you.