

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

### **ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT ALHADJI DR YAHYA A.J.J JAMMAEH**

#### **GAMBIA**

Mr Chairman, Excellencies,

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

This summit is unique in the sense that it reaffirms our global solidarity and commitment to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as an engine of growth for social and economic development.

Mr. Chairman,

The African continent is quite aware of the huge potentials ICTs hold for the attainment of the Millennium Developments Goals and the PRSPs. It is for this reason that various regional consultations have been held to advance Africa's capacity to harness and leverage ICTs to improve the socio-economic conditions of its people. Therefore, the commitment to use ICT as an entry point into the information society gave rise to the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). This commitment is considered not only with the national development blueprint of the Gambia (Vision 2020) which seeks to develop and use electronic information for development, but also the spirit embodied in the African Union and the NEPAD framework for the development of the African continent.

In this respect and within the framework of the AISI, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa( UNECA), assisted the Gambia to design an e-Government strategy to advance good governance, increase quality and efficiency in delivery of service to the citizenry and

government agencies, and lb for transparency and accountability in public resource management.

It was against this background that the ECA Committee for Development Information (CODI) meeting in May 2003 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia designated the Gambia to become an AISI model for e-Government for the African Continent.

In this regard, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the UNECA and it's partners for the support to the development of the strategy, and further solicit assistance to implement the strategy.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past two years, The Gambia Government registered significant achievements in ICT development. Notably, the e- Government Strategy and Action Plan; establishment of a national ICT Commission; development of a National Information and Communication Infrastructure policy

(NICI); connected 10 Departments of State (Ministries) to the Internet via a high-speed wireless access; encouraged government departments and agencies to develop their websites; registered a "gov.gm" domain name for exclusive use of Government; instituted a central email service for government employees: arrange for the development of IT human resources, support personnel. Again with the support of the UNECA lunched stakeholder networks in Gender, Youth, Parliamentarians and the Media for policy dialogue with the use of PCTs.

In the area of telecoms infrastructural development significant increase have been registered in access to the rural areas through the deployment of wireless technology.

By the end of 2005 it is projected that every village in the Gambia will have access to broadband services.

Similarly, in the area of Human resources development and with support from the ITU, the Department of State for Communication, Information & Technology in collaboration with the Gambia Telecommunications and Multimedia Institute (GTMI) has instituted a Basic Internet Training (BIT) programme for government employees and vulnerable groups in Gambian society.

More recently, a study has been launched to identify ICT indicators and to measure its value in the national economy, and consequently integrate this exercise in the National Statistics data collection framework as prescribed by the WSIS plan of action.

Mr, Chairman, Distinguished Excellencies,

Since WSIS I in Geneva, The Gambia has continued to build and strengthen partnerships to leverage ICTs to improve governance and deployment of the technologies in national development effort. To this end, The Gambia strongly associates itself with the Africa Regional Action Plan for the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) in its quest to further accelerate it's ICT development efforts.

Whilst we continue to be inspired and guided by the Declaration of Principles of The Information Society. and as we work towards the Action Plan to bridge the dic.ital divide that exists and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, I humbly enjoin heads of state and Government to do everything possible to pave the way to the successful

building of an inclusive information and knowledge-based society. A society where no one individual is left behind in utilizing the potential benefits offered by information and communication technologies.

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

These noble goals and objectives can only be achieved if the richer countries that are far ahead of the rest of the world in ICTs make a commitment to share their resources and technological know-how with the poorer and less advanced countries of the world. In the same vein I applaud the digital solidarity agenda initiative and I commend all those that have contributed to the digital solidarity fund.

However let me quickly say that While we embrace the benefits of ICTs in combating poverty and social exclusion, we must remain alert to their potential criminal abuse by deviant elements. It is therefore crucial that strong international cooperation frameworks are developed and utilized to combat cyber-crime in all its forms.

Mr. Chairman

Before I conclude let me add my voice to the other voice that have called for freedom of expression/freedom of press. My emphasis on the call for freedom of press is responsibility. As we participate in this world summit on the Information society, let us not forget that it was an

irresponsible bit of information that brought genocide in a beloved African country. How many times La exercising the right to freedom of expression have we incited violence, border crisis and civil unrest.

Let us use this powerful tools - ICTs to promote health, education, agriculture, good governance, the list goes on. We are tired of senseless wars and the destruction of many years of hard work. We can nurture peace and development with the use of ICTs and make this world a better place for all.

It is with great pleasure that we look forward to the outcome of this second phase of WSIS being held in the beautiful city of Tunis. I thank His Excellency President Zine Abdine Ben Ali, his Government and people the of Tunisia for their hospitality and for their efforts in making this event a success.

On this note, I once again wish to underscore my pleasure to be able to participate in such epoch-making event and hope that the outcome will be beneficial to all the inhabitants of our planet.

Thank you for you kind attention.