

**SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**  
**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LOMAIA**  
**MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**  
**GEORGIA**  
**17 NOVEMBER 2005**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of President Mikheil Saakashvili and the Government of Georgia let me extend our deep gratitude to the people and the Government of Tunisia, and to the International Telecommunication Union for an outstanding organization of this universally important Summit.

The objectives of the World Summit on the Information Society are to build a people-centered Information Society; to put the potential of knowledge and ICTs at the service of development; to promote the use of information for the achievement of UN Millennium Development Goals.

The Tunis phase offers a unique opportunity to evaluate progress made by the participating nations as well as by international organizations, private sector, and civil society towards the goals declared.

Just to emphasize how important the telecommunication sector development has been for my country, Georgia, I would like to present some statistics. The number of Internet users has grown from 100,000 in 2003 to more than 200,000 this year. The number of mobile phone users has doubled since 2003, exceeding the number of 1,000,000, which, in fact, makes wireless network available to every fourth citizen of my country.

The new Government of Georgia has effectively liberalized the regulation of the telecommunication sector. One needs no license any more to start telecommunication business in Georgia, all he/she needs to do is to get authorized with the National Communication Commission. The deregulation approach has immediately paid back as investments in the sector doubled in the course of the last year.

One of the priority tasks for the Georgian Government is to increase the quality of education in general schools by modernizing the outdated curriculum content, through web-based cooperative learning projects, overcoming unequal access to educational services, and enhancing the schools as ICT based community centers.

This year, with the help of our Estonian colleagues we have launched an ambitious school computerization project which is conceived as a modernization initiative that will substantially reflect on economic and societal rejuvenation of Georgia. The Deer Leap project mainly aims at (a) increasing the student-computer ratio from the current 200 to 1 to 30 to 1,

and (b) linking every school to the Internet by the year of 2009. The Government of Georgia has already made its strong commitment to the project by starting to aggressively invest in the project; however we would obviously need to match the state funds with outside sources to meet the targets.

Democratic and economic reforms in my country have been endangered by unfriendly politics carried out by our northern neighbor, which is being actively involved in supporting militarily, politically and financially the self-proclaimed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia where an ethnic cleansing of Georgian population has been carried out. Energetic and timely international efforts are needed to put an end to the attempts to annex these territories, thus brutally breaching the very basics of international law.

Georgia, with its unique ancient culture, and an educated society, does have the potential to participate in the formation of the Information Society on a full-scale basis. National endeavors to build an inclusive Information Society in each country however should be complemented by effective international efforts. Special attention in this respect, along with developing countries, has to be drawn to the economies in transition.

Reflecting on the issue of the Internet governance that is being actively debated, we wanted to underscore the importance of inadmissibility of governmental or intergovernmental restrictiveness on the international flow of information over the Internet. As Prof. Eli Noam put it in his yesterday article in the Financial Times, “any new international system of Internet governance, should be conditional on a clear declaration of freedom for the global flow of all Internet content”.

The attainment of our common global objective to build the Information Society, to a considerable extent, will depend on establishing an effective assistance mechanism that will help to assure the smooth and full inclusion of our citizens.

Needless to say, we look with hope to the international community which has a key role to play in this context.

I thank you, Mr. President.