

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

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Please check against delivery.

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen !

I. Introduction

Germany welcomes the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society and wants to thank the Government of Tunisia for being the host country of this important event.

This summit offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of the information society. The summit gives industrial states as well as developing countries a great chance to discuss our vision of a global society.

We can see every day that we are going through a historic transformation in the way we live, learn, and communicate. But the realization of a global information society needs common values – otherwise it will not work.

Therefore, we regard the recognition of human rights as a precondition for a global information society.

This means: freedom of expression, the protection of human dignity, and the guarantee of free, independent and diverse media.

The very basis of the Information Society is freedom of Information as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An essential precondition for a free exchange of information is the freedom of association in order to exchange information. The host country of this Information Summit bears here a special responsibility.

And as we are concerned in this regard, we support the demarche the Presidency of the European Union carried out on this issue yesterday.

II. Creating digital opportunities for all

In recognition of the increasing impact of Information and communication technologies on economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of people's lives, we have the obligation to enable everybody to join the Information Society. But how can we bridge the digital divide, how can we create digital opportunities for all?

First of all we need to ensure universal access by unleashing market power to promote ICT infrastructure. Secondly, we need to overcome other access barriers like illiteracy, the lack of local content or the scarcity of ICT professionals.

Admitting that development aid alone can not cope with these challenges, we need to cooperate with the private sector. In order to achieve this, ICT markets need to be opened.

Today, I believe we have the excellent opportunity and the pleasure to show again our willingness to participate actively in achieving our common goal – the creation of a truly inclusive Information Society – by having a candidate for the office of Secretary-General of the ITU, Mr Matthias Kurth. It is my honour to confirm to you that Mr Kurth has the full support of the German government for his candidacy to this important post. And I am particularly happy to announce that he is the elected European candidate of the CEPT-countries.

I appreciate that this summit brings together actors from governments, the civil society and the business sector.

Let us improve our activities by following a multi-stakeholder approach in order to bridge the digital divide.

III. Internet governance

The internet has become an essential and vital infrastructure for global communications and commerce. The success is based on flexible structures, which must be open for future needs.

Having its historic roots in the public sector, the Internet has become a huge success in all areas of society. Therefore, safeguarding the stability and security of the Internet is essential for the global information society.

We believe that long-term stability can only be achieved if the global management of the Internet core resources is based on participation. Therefore I appreciate the results of the PrepCom yesterday evening as a good step.

All stakeholders – governments, business as well as civil society – must have a chance to take part in global Internet governance in a fair and balanced manner.

It's by no means the role of government to interfere in the day-to-day operations of all those many entities that make sure that the Net is reliable. But with regard to outstanding public policy issues, and this includes the difficult question of oversight structures, governments have to exercise the role the citizens – “users” – have given to them.

However, necessary government involvement has to be lightweight, transparent, inclusive, and in full respect of the specific needs of the Internet.

IV. Information society Germany

On the basis of targeted national action plans, Germany has progressed on the way to the global information society.

The exhibitions and presentations at our German exhibition booth at the “ICT for All” exhibition provide an overview of German activities.

I hope the Summit will be a great success – please feel free to contact us. As in the past, the German Government is ready to share its experience and engage in an exchange of views.