**SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS
STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. DAYANIDHI MARAN
HON'BLE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS &
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

16 NOVEMBER 2005

Mr. Chairman,

As I address this august gathering, I feel humbled by the enormous expectations that the world has from this historic summit. The decisions that we are taking here will impact human society for at least a generation to come. I must at the outset compliment the Secretary General for having given us this vision of utilising the ICT for the greater benefit of mankind. It is my great pleasure and privilege to compliment you Mr. Chairman for the deft manner in which you have guided our work. Thanks are equally due to the Chairman of the preparatory committee and the officials of all countries including those of the secretariat, who have laboured hard to produce the documents that are before us.

Mr. Chairman, it is about two years since we last met at Geneva and adopted what are now the GENEVA PRINCIPLES. During these two years, ICT has evolved substantially. And equally, much useful work is carried out and initiated towards greater use of ICT for development. Yet I cannot help but underscore that a lot more needs to be done between countries and within respective countries to obliterate what we call the Digital Divide. It is time Mr. Chairman, for us to stop using regressive symbols such as division and use ICT for multiplication of information leading to generation of additional wealth and happiness.

Enough has been said about the need for using the ICT. The time is now to delve into the how of it. So far, ICT has been used more for the privileged than for those who are most in need of assistance in their daily lives, be it for health, education or poverty reduction or disaster management. Are we unwittingly therefore, allowing ourselves to be slaves of the Information disorder instead of being masters of the information society?

I speak with the confidence of belonging to a society which is faced with sizeable problems, but has successfully integrated ICT into the development process. By any yardstick, the problems notwithstanding, ours is a success story. We have significantly increased our tele-density and used ICT in various spheres. At the same time, we are acutely aware that our rural areas still need to catch up in a big way.

Central to the effort to bring ICT into the ordinary lives is the question of access.

Computers still remain the preserve of small elite. We in India have developed sub US $ 200 computers. Even this is not enough. Unless the computer reaches virtually every home, it cannot become an effective weapon against underdevelopment. Human society is rich because of its diversity, including languages. The computer needs to be compatible with the mother tongue in order to be of maximum utility. Coming from a country which itself has a large number of languages and dialects; we have in our country, successfully developed, Machine Aided Translation in a large number of languages. We shall be happy to share this knowledge with those interested.

India is increasingly integrating ICT into its national development plans and adopting strategies for technological learning. Our expanding infrastructure promotes technological development, including establishing business and technology incubators and export processing zones. Its success, especially in the field of export of software and services has been widely acclaimed.

We are at the cusp of a historical moment. The technology scenario unfolding before us is so dynamic and complex that we have abundances and scarcities staring at us. The challenges before us is to design an improved organisation structure where the legal and regulatory framework to promote ICTs is in place. We must create capacity to manage the business process changes that ICTs will bring in its wake.

- an institutional mechanism to help local development and manufacturing of ICT applications and Technologies;

- citizen engagement and community participation especially for societal IT applications for education and health improvement;

Let us today, solemnly resolve to create an information society where financial flows are adequate and predictable so that strategic planning is possible; and where communities are empowered through multilingualization and localization of content and applications access.

International cooperation is a sine qua non of the new Information Society and the Internet is both a robust and in fact the ideal medium. If the Internet is a shared resource, so must be its oversight and management. I am happy that the summit has made a beginning down that road. We regard this as a preliminary and modest step. The outcome document embodies our collective resolve that we move slowly but surely towards a system of oversight and management which is responsive to the changes in technology, the emergence of new stakeholders and becomes a truly multi layered, multi stakeholder system which is democratic, transparent and above all gives a sense of ownership and participation to all concerned. While doing so we must acknowledge and pay tribute to the pioneering spirit of those who made internet possible and the society which carefully nurtured such a precious asset from which the world has benefited immensely.

Let me conclude Mr. Chairman by expressing confidence in ICT as a harbinger of equitable, humane and peaceful society.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.