

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

### STATEMENT FROM JAMAICA

DELIVERED BY  
SENATOR THE HON. BURCHELL WHITEMAN  
MINISTER OF INFORMATION, JAMAICA  
HEAD OF DELEGATION  
THIRD PLENARY MEETING  
NOVEMBER 17, 2005

Mr. President of the Summit; Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen

**I greet you in the spirit of the millennium anthem composed by the Jamaican Bob Marley — 'One Love'.**

The Government of Jamaica is pleased to pledge its active support to these crucial Summit deliberations, aimed at generating greater economic, cultural and social benefits for our peoples, from the burgeoning global advances in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs ). Our gathering here in the hospitable and historic city of Tunis, is the necessary sequel to our earlier meeting in Geneva, where we agreed on the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action as seminal documents to guide our decisions.

The theme of this part of the Summit, "**From Commitment to Action**," is consistent with the core objectives of the WSIS - to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

Jamaica recognizes that ICTs are not ends in themselves, but rather, **development tools**. "Bridging the digital divide," really means promoting social and economic development for the 80% of our countries that struggle most with the impact of this gap.

Fully committed to the achievement of the **Millennium Development Goals**, Jamaica has committed itself to among other things—mainstreaming and aligning national e-strategies; developing enabling policies; building ICT capacities and implementing meaningful strategies for training and education for all.

Mr. President, even as we seek to overcome the challenges of the digital divide, and benefit from "the greatest period of wealth creation, ushered in by the Internet," there are some issues, which threaten to perpetuate the gap between developed and developing countries.

Critical among these issues is the matter of resources. Achievement of goals of the WSIS Plans and ICT development for all is dependent on the mobilization of considerable financial resources.

It is important therefore that we recommit to the **Monterrey Consensus**, and the sustainability of the **Digital Solidarity Fund**, which together will address inequities in the global economic system and enable the smaller economies to realize their full potential as part of the global community.

In this context also, is the need to put ICTs at the service of small island states, states which like that in the Caribbean are prone to natural disasters, and also at the service of vulnerable individuals, communities and countries. We're committed also to protect and promote the cultural diversity of content in the Information Society.

Equally, in every part of the world, all of us should be actively seeking to innovate, and create appropriate technologies to meet the needs of our people. Those countries that are further along this continuum of innovation should be encouraged to market these technologies on equitable terms in the spirit of global development.

Such approaches should foster the exchange of environmentally sustainable technologies on preferential terms where appropriate, to help to generate greater access.

For our part, in keeping with the dictates of the pace of the Information Society, Jamaica has made a successful beginning, and despite the inherent challenges, in the light of our articulated common vision and the commitment made by the world's peoples whom we represent, we are determined to achieve the goals set.

Bold and imaginative policy decisions, as well as legal and regulatory reform, has positioned Jamaica in the top 20 per cent of the world's population in terms of Internet access. We continue to seek to expand this capacity to generate greater economic activity and improvements in overall living standards.

Since 1999, Jamaica has increased its teledensity from less than 20% to more than 80%, (from 118,000 cellular phones to 2.2 million in 2004) using the opportunities presented by mobile communications technology, and have expanded the digital infrastructure by granting new fibre optic licenses. The **Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU)** of the **Economist Magazine**, recognizes Jamaica as performing as a regional leader in six e-commerce related categories.

Jamaica has also exceeded the global average of 6.45 in the Legal and Policy Environment category.

This ranking is not by chance. Our modernization programme propels both the public and private sectors (including the telecommunications providers) simultaneously, toward a more modern and development oriented operational framework.

The Government is using ICTs to offer on-line degree programmes, create enhanced delivery of high school curricula to all of our 160 high schools and power the Government's Information Service to widen access to real time public information and relevant archived material.

Our most recent initiative is the recent introduction of **Broadband Internet Technology**, which will allow for faster and cheaper Internet access in two months' time. We continue this work with determination and mention these successes modestly, to encourage those just beginning, and to commit to sharing freely our experiences, to demonstrate that together, we can.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude Mr. President,

- Jamaica is fully committed to goals of the WSIS, which include effective governance and equitable development of the Internet
- We will seek to ensure that the commitments made here at this Summit are translated into positive action.
- We will continue to locate our own policies in the context of the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action
- We call upon those who are more advanced and better resourced than we are to act in the same spirit
- The information resource combined with the technology resources available to the world has the power to transform the world — for good or ill.
- We must make the right choice and we must do it now. To quote a line from one of our 20th century Jamaican poets, "Forward while time is burning...Forward before it's late."

Thank you.