

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT FROM THE LIECHTENSTEIN GOVERNMENT

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Liechtenstein Government I would like to express my gratitude to the Tunisian Government for hosting this event and for the warm welcome and kind hospitality. It is a great honor for me as Minister for Information and Telecommunication to address this assembly and to share with you some ideas on the information society from a Liechtenstein point of view.

Information and communication technologies are powerful engines of economic and social progress. They have also become increasingly important for Liechtenstein and its progressing integration into the global economy during the last century. National and international enterprises, especially in the areas of high-tech industry and financial services, rely, to a large extent, on excellent communication systems. For them, the ICT factor plays a central role, increasing the potential of the traditional productive forces i.e. human resources, means of production and materials. One of the challenges Liechtenstein has been facing is the provision and promotion of adequate education and training of experts. In this respect I am pleased to note that today the university of Liechtenstein offers bachelor and masters degrees as well as post-graduate training in ICT, which is adapted to the specific needs of finance and industry in our country. Regular exchange with foreign universities allows to keep pace with the developments of ICT and constitutes one of the main reasons for the considerable percentage of foreign students enrolled in ICT courses at Liechtenstein university.

Mr. Chairman,

Talking about challenges, we also have to mention the security aspect, which is somehow the other side of the medal when promoting and developing ICT systems and networks. Crimes committed through the use of the internet not only affect persons individually but can pose a risk to the overall

economic prosperity. Liechtenstein is striving to ensure the highest possible level of security and data protection. We have implemented the European standards as set out in the respective EU directives, and participate actively in several programs of the European Union on e-Commerce, e-Health, e-Finance, e-Content, e-Security, e-Accessibility or e-Learning. The national police of Liechtenstein have set up a special-unit to combat cyber crime and established close operational relations with several of their foreign counterparts. For a small country like Liechtenstein, constantly meeting the ever evolving requirements and guaranteeing the European-wide high standard entails an enormous administrative effort. However, we are convinced that this effort is well invested in order to offer high quality of services combined with high security.

I would like to point out in this regard that Liechtenstein attaches great importance to the aspect of international cooperation. The security chain is only as strong as its weakest link. There is a need for universal collaboration in the setting of standards and their global implementation. Such cooperation must not be limited to the intergovernmental level. Active participation of civil society and the private sector is indispensable if we are to maximize the benefits of ICT for all while keeping its potential risks to an absolute minimum. Risks of misuse may also arise through the collection and distribution of personal data, in particular if this is done without the knowledge of the individuals concerned. We have to ensure that the right to privacy is respected in all parts of the world. Preserving the right to privacy and the protection of personal data is especially important in connection with current national and international efforts to further step up counter-terrorism measures.

Mr. Chairman,

The main objective of the Summit on the Information Society has been and still is to overcome the digital divide between and within countries and to ensure that all people can benefit from the potentials of information and communication technologies. We have all subscribed to this goal, which is one of the Millennium Development Goals. One of the most successful projects initiated by the Liechtenstein development service in recent years has been a radio education program in Central America. It enables people living in remote areas to attend classes and to obtain a degree, including members of indigenous groups since part of the program is conducted in indigenous languages. The project which was originally launched in one country has been constantly expanded at the national level and covers now also other countries in the region. The Liechtenstein development service is also supporting the creation of an internet information platform for farmers in Eastern Africa. The platform will provide information on inexpensive and locally adapted

methods of ecological pest and disease control for human beings, animals and useful plants as well as on sustainable agriculture. It is intended to help improve health, nutrition, education and income situation of the rural population. These examples show that the promotion of information and communication technologies is not a goal in itself but a means to improve other areas of life. We consider it important that new information and communication technologies are used particularly for the rural development as well as for the empowerment of women and girls and other disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Chairman,

The two-phased nature of this summit has given us the opportunity to focus our attention on the challenges of an inclusive, safe and human-rights-based information society for a longer time-span than is usually the case. We are called upon to keep up the momentum at the national and international levels in order to close the digital divide and to make our networks as secure as possible. We have to seek for global solutions while taking into due account that the needs and challenges are not the same in the different parts of the world. Let me assure you that Liechtenstein remains fully committed to these goals.

I thank you.