SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY HON PATRICIA KALIATI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND TOURISM, M. P. ON BEHALF OF HIS EXELLENCY DR. BINGU WA MUTHARIKA PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

Mr. President of the Summit,
Your Excellencies,
And Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the President of the Republic of Malawi, His Excellency Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, the people of Malawi and on my own behalf, I convey **heartfelt** greetings to the President and people of Tunisia from the **Warm heart of Africa**, Malawi.

I wish at the outset to express my gratitude to the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union and his entire executive for holding the World Summit on Information Society.

I applaud the Government and People of Tunisia for hosting this summit, and for the hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival.

History will never lose sight of this great event held on the soils of Africa. I am glad and proud that I have the opportunity to be personally associated with this great event.

Mr. President
It is indeed now time to focus on **action,** to implement the plans and produce solutions using ICTs to address the many problems facing us, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation just to mention a few.
It is my hope that this summit will set an agenda that will ensure least developed countries, including Malawi, leapfrogs the digital divide.

The presence of Malawi's delegation at this summit is a clear testimony of our determination to join other members of the global family marching towards the global Information Society.

We are proud of our modest achievements in the implementation of WSIS Plan of Action. We have integrated ICT into our development strategies. We have formulated our National ICT and Rural Telecommunications for Development Policies. Our communication sector is fully liberalized, duty on computers and computer peripherals has been removed, in order to attract investors, extend services to rural areas, and alleviate poverty.

With regards to the connectivity agenda

The liberalized communication sector has resulted into an increase in the number of information and communication service providers.

Fixed telephone network covers 80% of Malawi, a nation-wide fibre-optic broadband network is under development, a government wide area network is also being developed as a communication backbone for e-government. Institutions of higher learning are connected through VSAT based network.

On improving access to ICTs
Radio and Television are the most basic, affordable and simpler form of ICTs accessed by many Malawians. Computers and internet access are covering limited part of the country. It is our wish that every citizen should have access to ICT enabled services for accelerated development.

On ICTs in Education
Malawi recognizes that ICTs in education is a very important strategy to build sustainable ICT human resource capacity and increase people's literacy levels through e-learning. We have started adopting the e-education curriculum at secondary and tertiary levels of education to enhance ICT knowledge and competence of our youth. ICTs are also being utilized to enhance administration and management of the education institutions.

Mr. President

We are grateful and appreciative for the continued support we have enjoyed in building our human capacity in ICT development and utilization from our cooperating partners since WSIS 2003. With assistance from cooperating partners, we have trained some of – and we continue to train our Public servants in ICT skills. We are looking forward to greater cooperation.

On development of ICT applications and local content

Malawi has developed a number of applications under its e-government initiative to improve delivery of public services such as processing of passports and driving licences.

More applications are being developed including border control and national identification applications. The private sector is also improving e-business, especially in the e-banking area.

There is still more to be done to maximize benefits of ICTs through development of relevant applications and content. This would include recognition of local languages, diverse cultures and needs of various stakeholders such as women, children and youth.

Mr. President

Least developed countries, including Malawi, are facing challenges in the development and utilization of ICTs. The greatest challenges are limited financial resources and ICT human resource capacity. Other challenges include:
- Limited private sector investment in the ICT sector, both local and foreign
- Inadequate and unreliable basic infrastructure such as power especially in the rural areas
- High cost of ICT infrastructure and services

It is my hope, therefore, that the arrangements agreed at this summit will offer least developed countries solutions to address these challenges.

Lastly, I would like to commend the United Nations for recognizing ICT for development as a global issue.

I thank you for your attention.
Long Live United Nations. Long Live ITU.
Long live information society