

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF THE NETHERLANDS TUNIS, 17 NOVEMBER 2005

Mr. Chairman, Secretary-General, Heads of State and Government, Honorable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of The Netherlands I would like to thank the Tunisian Government for hosting this unique event.

These days we are discussing information and communication technologies and the freedom to use them. ICT is a fundamental element in our societies. The impact on economic, social and democratic processes is enormous.

In our times ICT is the catalyst for development. ICT is a means for development, not a goal in itself. In order to fully exploit the development potential of ICT the Netherlands considers an enabling environment of critical importance. ICT should be an integral part of all national policies and practices in order to be fully effective. This varies from education to health, from libraries to information literacy, and from agriculture to human rights. ICT gives us unprecedented possibilities to close the development gap and to create social innovation.

ICT has brought and will continue to bring about changes to the social, technological and legal environment in which our current human rights system matured. There are not only benefits, we have to face the fact that ICT can also pose threats to human rights.

To give an example. On the one hand the large scale use of personal data has improved the efficiency of governments and the private sector. On the other hand the misuse of ICT could create serious problems for private life and private correspondence.

Any use of ICT should respect the right to privacy. Censorship could hamper the freedom of information and expression. We as governments have the obligation to prevent state and private censorship by means of effective legal and practical measures, including international peer pressure.

Without pluralism of opinions and expressions, there is no true 'democratic information society'.

Mr. Chairman. The involvement of private sector and civil society has contributed significantly to the success of the World Summit on the Information Society. They have among other things increased the awareness of important aspects of the information society such as human rights, social and economic development.

In its relative short history the internet has become critical for the economic, social and democratic development of our societies. A failure of the internet could result in an enormous chaos in public

live. We have to make sure that we have done everything to protect the proper functioning and management of the internet.

Security and stability are key. Since Geneva all stakeholders have engaged in reducing spam. We will have to continue and increase our efforts. We have to fight cybercrime.

I very much welcome the creation of a new Forum on Internet Governance.

The historic and very conscious role of the US as the ultimate authority over some of the core resources of the internet should be reviewed in the light of the enormous growth of the internet and its use all over the world. We must try to find the way which leads to a more shared responsibility among all stakeholders. We need to arrive at a situation which is future proof. Not by creating new institutions, but by building on the existing structures in such a way that it satisfies the legitimate concerns of all stakeholders, including governments. Not one of the stakeholders should dominate, but all stakeholders must participate fully, according to their roles and responsibilities.

Here we agreed to make the first step to the enhanced cooperation we all desire. And we have to prepare for the next step. We have to do it now. I am too old to be patient.

Mr. Chairman. The follow-up and implementation of this Summit are of crucial importance. At the international level, the UN system has an important responsibility to assist governments to stay fully engaged, but I should emphasise that implementation is primarily a national responsibility. Full participation of civil society and private sector are of vital importance for the agreed follow-up framework.

That is why we should also build on the achievements of ICANN as an operational framework. Reinforcement of ICANN's governance requires a broader participation.

Implementation should be integrated and coordinated, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I therefore call upon the UN Secretary General to actively pursue system-wide inter-agency coordination and cooperation.

To conclude: the biggest achievement of this Summit is that it has raised awareness amongst all stakeholders that we face a number of challenging questions related to the Information Society. Many of these questions demand an coherent and concerted international approach.

Closing the digital divide, enhancing the cooperation in internet governance, and creating an open and enabling environment are our shared goals.

We need to move from principles to action. We need to do this, not just for our future, but for the future of our children and their children.

Thank you