SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

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Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this speech on behalf of the Minister for Information Technology, the Honourable David Cunliffe (New Zealand) who attended the Geneva Summit. His attendance today was precluded by our recent general election and the subsequent formation of the new government.

Although at the second phase of this World Summit on the Information Society, we are now on the verge of the knowledge revolution. Some of us are beginning to explore the real cultural, social and economic implications of the revolution for globalised information sharing — while others remain unconnected and isolated. And while those isolated suffer from ignorance of what we know, we too suffer from our isolation from their ideas, thoughts, culture and knowledge.

This Summit process provides us with an opportunity to debate the processes at work in society today, and a framework to translate principles into actions.

Faster and easier access to information is demanded by all sectors of society. Broadband Internet is essential infrastructure for business and very important for New Zealand. In contrast to the printed word, **digital content** can be shaped, transformed and transmitted instantly. This power - while raising questions - opens up huge creative possibilities. Indeed an innovation being worked on in New Zealand will literally make images leap up at you from the page.

The information society and the sort of impact I have just mentioned throws up tremendous opportunities, and with it, plenty of challenges.

Our overriding aim should be to empower all sectors of society by giving them:
- affordable connection to high-speed networks
- access to meaningful and relevant content
- the skills to find the information they need and use it to best advantage
- confidence that their rights are being protected

Distinguished delegates — New Zealanders have a practical approach: we are acting upon the WSIS principles. This year, we launched our overarching 'Digital Strategy' (see www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz), in which the WSIS principles have been translated into a powerful blue-print for action in our country. We have focused on actions relating to three 'enablers': Content, Confidence, and Connection. We have decided to apply those to Government, Communities and Business. We are applying to all actions the principles of Collaboration and Continuity.

In particular, we are emphasising:

- **Policy responsiveness —** the government has consulted extensively in the development of the Strategy, and I have established a group of Business and Community leaders to advise me on our Digital Future;
- **Connection —** we have launched a Broadband Challenge to connect all New Zealanders;
- **Access to information and knowledge.** Preserving the digital cultural heritage of nations and peoples is vital: otherwise the danger is digital amnesia. Maintaining access to digital content is part of our comprehensive National Digital Content Strategy.
- **Building** Confidence of individuals– teaching the information skills which all sectors of the population need, through formal education and life-long learning;
- **Building confidence and security in the use of ICT;**
- **Cultural diversity and local Content –** we have launched a fund for digitising local content and establishing common standards.

Since the WSIS process began, we have:
- Provided broadband access to all schools;
- Developed high-speed networks for government and the research sector;
- increased public access to e-government information
- launched the new online Encyclopedia of New Zealand
- passed legislation requiring the deposit of New Zealand digital publications with the National Library.
- Launched funds for the Broadband Challenge (a fund to encourage urban networks and the Community Partnership Fund to encourage communities to get the best from ICT.

Why are we doing these things?
- we have an economic imperative: to stimulate growth and innovation;
- we have a social imperative: to make our multicultural society confident and cohesive;
- we have a cultural imperative: New Zealand's indigenous Maori people are using ICT to secure and foster their culture;
- we have a democratic imperative: to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes - in effect to develop an 'information democracy';
- we have a strategic imperative: we are a small country, far from the world's main population and trading centres: we have to find smart ways to stay connected, and overcome distance.

Much of the second phase of the Summit has focused on the Internet, as a key tool of the information society, although we must not lose sight of the fact that there is much more to information and communication than just the "Internet". We have all had a chance to reflect on the Internet's staggering growth, on its use to empower people and communities, and on our responsibility to ensure the Internet is used as a positive force.

Through the dialogue on Internet governance there have been positive developments. New Zealand applauds the emphasis on a multi-stakeholder approach that includes business and

civil society. What a refreshing and empowering approach. We have had the opportunity to hear the voice of Internet users, of our Internet community in New Zealand, and that of our Pacific Islands neighbours. We welcome the active contribution to this debate by the developing countries, reflecting their awareness of the importance of ICT for increasing economic and social well-being.

I note here that New Zealand has offered to host the 2006 Pacific Islands Forum meeting of ICT Ministers, aiming to advance a regional digital strategy. We are also hosting the ICANN meeting in March 2006 and have taken a close interest in the outcome of the WSIS process.

From New Zealand's perspective, the Internet has worked in part due to its decentralised nature and the active involvement of users in its development. In fact, it has been a remarkable success story of global participation and change driven from the bottom up. It has proved to be robust and reliable.

There are many issues we must address, at international and often at national levels, to improve the current arrangements. The current mechanisms have evolved very rapidly, allowing the Internet to grow, solving issues on the way, and we are pleased to see the commitment to continue that evolution through the WSIS process.

I also want to emphasise our support for international co-operation to address emerging cybersecurity threats and issues such as spam (where I have recently introduced legislation into our Parliament). New Zealand believes that a key reason for expediting domestic anti-spam legislation is to enable us to participate actively in much needed multilateral solutions. My government also supports work on multilateral anti-spam action plans, we commit to it, and enjoin others to engage also.

We must also work collectively on other cross-border issues, and making the Internet work in local languages and for local communities – multi-lingualism, freedom of expression and the protection of cultural intellectual property are also important.

Here also at the Summit we have some examples of 'Kiwi ingenuity' and local content to display to you. In 2003, two New Zealand ICT initiatives were international finalists in the World Summit Awards; this year, from our eight national finalists two were given special mention by WSA: Fencepost.com (linking the agricultural sector) and EyeMagic (applying augmented reality to children's books: as just one example)

Distinguished delegates, we must work collectively at the international level, and as nations, as individuals, to translate the WSIS principles into actions. We must mainstream these actions into the work of relevant UN agencies and their civil society partners. I wish you every success in doing so.

Thank you for your attention.