

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

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Mr. President
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

From the islands of Samoa, we say Talofa lava and good morning! I bring you warm greetings from the Government and the people of the Independent State of Samoa, a Small Island Developing State, in the South Pacific.

We are extremely honoured and privileged to be present here today at this Second Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, and we thank our hosts, the Government and people of Tunisia, for the great welcome and the kind hospitality.

The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society grants Samoa the opportunity of actively being involved in the discussions over the concrete measures designed for implementing the "Declaration of Principles" and the "Plan of Action" adopted in the Geneva Summit.

The Government of Samoa offers her full support for the World Summit on the Information Society and we are committed to move Samoa towards the knowledge economy and the Information Society.

Since the first phase of WSIS, which we were also involved in, Samoa has developed her own National e-Strategy and was officially launched in March 2005. I am pleased to announce that, from that strategy, we are now implementing some ICT projects in the rural communities in collaboration with ITU and UNDP, and we are grateful for their continuing assistance. We believe that ICT can be used as a tool for promoting economic, social and cultural development. The focus is also on using ICT to help achieve the Millennium Development goals.

Information and Communication Technologies have transformed the world into a global village and has changed the way we do business, the way we learn and the way we live. In today's information age, ICT has become essential to Samoa's ability to be a player in today's global economy.

Current reforms in the Communications sector, financed by the World Bank, has resulted in the passage in Parliament of a new Telecommunications Bill in June 2005, that would establish a new Regulatory Authority, and introducing competition and private sector participation. There has also been the drive by Government through its national telecommunications operator to develop the infrastructure backbone that will allow ICT to be extended to the rural areas. We must try to bridge the digital divide. Not only to provide knowledge workers for the future knowledge-based economy, but also to create citizens who are capable of enjoying the new digital era that is upon us.

What we must remember is that we are all here to help promote the quality of life of our peoples. We firmly believe that ICT is the key if we are to move into the future; a future of better understanding, and better quality of life for all.

On Internet Governance, and the question on “oversight”, we support the current framework and existing mechanisms, but recognizing there is scope for improvement, we would support ongoing evolution of the current arrangements.

Samoa would support the creation of a forum for dialogue, within or supported by an existing institution, focusing on identifying new issues, raising awareness and understanding, building capacity and building commitment to action, particularly amongst developing countries, on priority Internet issues, for example, the use and misuse of the Internet.

The Internet is now an important global means of communications and commerce, which is of critical importance to peoples and governments of all countries, as increasingly also vital to their national security.

Samoa offers its full support to the “Tunis Commitment” as well as the “Tunis Agenda for the Information Society” presented for the adoption by the Summit. Samoa also supports the use of existing implementation and follow-up arrangements to major UN conferences and summits, for WSIS implementation and follow-up.

For a small island developing state, we do not have the resources to implement our national ICT strategy and to fully take advantage of the benefits that ICT can offer. Therefore we look forward to partnerships with the international donor community, multi-lateral agencies and development partners in order to achieve our goals and vision.

In conclusion, access to Information and Communication Technologies is crucial to development. ICT have become so diffused in many social and economic activities that it needs to be given top priority. Giving access and helping people learn to use ICT is crucial to prevent the expansion of the gaps between the rich and the poor, leading to a better Information Society.

Thank you for your attention.

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