

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR LEE BOON YANG, MINISTER FOR

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS & THE ARTS

SINGAPORE

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Excellencies
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

ICT Development and the WSIS Process

The advance and ubiquity of ICT has had a profound impact on the economic and social progress of all countries. The benefits from deploying ICT are apparent in nearly every field of human endeavour. So are the divides faced by those who are unable to adopt and utilise ICT for various reasons. It was the emergence and recognition of these divides which prompted the community of nations to initiate the World Summit on Information Society.

The Tunis Summit will build on the success of the first WSIS in Geneva. Over the past two years, we have all worked in an open and inclusive manner to implement the commitments we made in Geneva. For instance, we have reached agreement on financial mechanisms for development, spam control and cyber-security. Singapore welcomes and supports such consensus.

Singapore's Efforts at Building an Information Society

Singapore first saw the importance of harnessing ICT for progress in the early 1980s. Since then, we have invested much effort and resources in programmes to attain our vision of deploying ICT as a key enabler to unleash the potential of our people and create opportunities for our citizens. While more remains to be done, today, Singapore offers an interconnected, mobile, broadband and wired as well as wireless environment for work, play and learning.

The Government is itself a lead user of ICT. We offer Singaporeans 24/7 on-line e-government service delivery as well as promote inclusive and active citizenry through on-line contacts for policy consultations and feedback. More than 1,600 government services are now available online. ICT is extensively used for education, healthcare and many other social services. E-government has

also enhanced citizens' inputs on public policies and provided more accessible and timely public services.

To help us advance into the next phase of growth as an Information Society, Singapore is developing a new strategic master-plan, known as Intelligent Nation 2015, or iN2015. This master-plan is an attempt to identify critical new infocomm developments and will serve as our ICT roadmap for the next ten years.

Internet Governance – Singapore's View

Allow me to turn now to one of the major issues that has preoccupied WSIS for the past two years, namely Internet Governance. It is self-evident that the Information Society is founded on the continued development of the Internet. The Internet is a truly revolutionary modern phenomenon. In a short span of less than two decades, it has become a crucial component of global commerce, communications and human development. It is no surprise therefore, that governance of this pervasive and strategic medium has been of much interest to participants at this Summit.

Singapore supports the Joint Statement of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, or ASEAN, on the issue of Internet Governance. We share the view that Internet Governance must be inclusive and responsive. It must facilitate development. We also accept that while there is a need to improve governance of the Internet, we should not view such governance as the sole domain of governments. The importance of continued technological Internet developments and deployment reinforces the advantage of a partnership approach whereby Governments, industry and civil society work together for the benefit of all who are touched by this wonderful invention.

However we urge greater recognition of the legitimate interest of governments in the public policy issues connected and influenced by the Internet. The interest of governments in the Internet is not unfounded nor is it due to a lack of understanding of how the Internet works. Take for example the recent ICANN proposal for a new generic top level domain for adult content, .xxx; The United States government promptly requested ICANN to study this matter further. In doing so, it echoed the concerns of many countries around the world. This clearly shows that governance of the Internet affects public policy and national interests.

The challenge before us is how to better serve these public interests in a manner that respects the unique architecture and traditions of the Internet. Singapore believes that a top-down inter-governmental structure may not be the right fit. Instead, we should work to enhance the existing governance structure. An evolutionary approach will provide time for more consultation and deeper appreciation of the intricacies of making the Internet a true force for advancing the cause of humanity.

To us, therefore, the answer lies in strengthening and evolving existing structures to respond more positively and effectively to the growing global significance of the Internet and the legitimate aspirations of all those whose lives are affected by it. There is no question that these existing structures and institutions must become more international in nature. This process of change should gather momentum after WSIS and move forward with clear milestones and deliverables.

Conclusion

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Tunis Summit is the Summit of Solutions and Actions. Far from being the end of our work, it signals the beginning of concerted and global efforts to achieve an all-inclusive global Information Society. Singapore supports the report that has been submitted

to this Summit for endorsement. The report charts a vision for the global community to achieve the full benefits of an Information Society for all.

Thank you.