

## **SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**

### **STATEMENT BY H.E. MRS ASTRID DUFBORG AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA**

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen...

I would like to start with thanking Tunisia for hosting the Summit.

The right to freedom of expression and access to information, including communication are prerequisites for ensuring the debate and the participation necessary for a democratic society. The promotion and protection of both access to information itself and flows of information that exist between governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations are of equal importance. In my country Sweden the interaction between these actors have played a major role in the development of our modern society.

Sweden was a poor country a hundred years ago, but our constitution laid down the right to freedom of expression for all people. In addition free primary and secondary education for children was a reality by law. This laid the foundation for an inclusive and transparent welfare state.

Madame/Mr. Chairperson,

We see the use of ICT as a major dynamic force in our society and in the economy. We believe that information and communications technology (ICT) has the potential to be an effective instrument for democratization and poverty reduction in all societies, regardless of cultural diversity and level of development. We must therefore invest in education, research and infrastructure. Today, sophisticated ICT solutions are deeply integrated into Sweden's traditional industrial, public and service sectors. Our long tradition of engineering and innovation has given us both an excellent telecommunications system and a cutting-edge ICT industry.

ICTs are unique in that they cut across all economic and social sectors. ICT can catalyze new types of development, promote a more effective use of development resources and foster accountability, transparency and interaction with citizens.

Developing countries should be able to utilize the potential of ICT to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. ICT can empower people and ultimately strengthen human rights, not least by promoting freedom of expression and a free flow of information. Both old and new ICT services can address traditional development challenges. Governments should invest in physical infrastructure of the public administration not only to improve service delivery but also to reduce opportunities for mismanagement of public resources. Such investments will improve the speed, reliability, accountability and transparency of public sector transactions.

Madame/Mr. Chairperson,

Sweden, as one of the leading countries in the field of ICT for development, has the ambition to develop ICT as a strategic area for our development cooperation. Support for ICT in development is included in bilateral development programs with partner countries.

I am happy to share a successful example with you on how technological innovation can spread the benefits of ICT. Ericsson, one of the world's leading telecom companies, is launching a new business model for low-cost rural mobile telephony. The model is piloted in Tanzania, in partnership with Sweden and UNDP.

The experiences of Tanzania illustrate that ICT can have a positive impact on the livelihoods of poor people. Tanzania has a National ICT Policy that is based on the country's development vision. ICT has also been integrated into the country's poverty reduction strategy. In the Tanzania National Pavilion at the *ICT 4 all* exhibition, a rich variety of projects are being showcased. They demonstrate the effective use of ICT in health, education and in the combat against HIV/AIDS. Young artists from Tanzania are also showing that ICT can be a powerful instrument for cultural expression as illustrated by their multimedia performances at this Summit. Sweden has supported some of these initiatives, such as computer labs in All Teacher Training Colleges in Tanzania, the conversion of open source software into Kiswahili and the development of Ericsson's new business model for rural access. These building blocks are forming an inclusive Tanzanian information society, where ICT can benefit all citizens.

Madame/Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to conclude with a couple of remarks on how Sweden sees the future discussions on Internet Governance. Sweden wants to ensure that the Internet remains an engine of innovation, investment and as an important tool to bridge digital divides, within and between nations. It is also a paramount objective for us to preserve the stability and security of the Internet. We therefore need to make sure that governments refrain from unnecessary regulation and governmental control that might hinder the positive development of this vital infrastructure.

However, governments need to have an influence on the policies of international cooperation on Internet governance when they affect public policy interests. This influence should thus be exercised through a stronger participation in already existing processes in a public-private partnership and not by creating intergovernmental bodies replacing any existing organizations.

Madame/Mr. Chairperson,

Sweden hopes and expects that this summit can be concluded with a strong commitment to the Declaration of Principles and the implementation of the Plan of Action agreed upon in Geneva as well as the Tunis agenda for the Information society.

Thank you.