

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS
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HEAD OF DELEGATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

17 November 2005

Mr President

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes this opportunity to share with the wider global community our perspectives on the key issues addressed during the second phase of WSIS.

We are convinced that if properly harnessed, ICTs can contribute to achieving the MDGs and significant benefits can accrue to all societies. Like many states, aspiring to higher levels of socio-economic development, we see the strategic use of ICT's as imperative for both domestic development and the deepening of our integration into the global economy.

In our view, this Tunis Phase of WSIS provides an invaluable opportunity for the global community to establish the parameters which will guide the growth of a new inclusive information society; with a primary focus on development. Thus, Trinidad and Tobago would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the foresight of the architects of this collaborative process.

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to emphasize the need for special consideration of small island developing states (SIDS) in the WSIS development agenda. Such considerations must recognize the particular challenges faced by SIDS due to their smaller economies; human resource constraints; vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters; and limited financial resources compounded by their inability to access financing from international development agencies, on reasonable terms.

We fully support the Digital Solidarity Fund, which seeks to ensure that developing countries have access to financial resources to combat the digital divide. We therefore commend the leading role taken by the President of Senegal in championing this Fund. In a similar vein, we wish to emphasise the needs of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for both financial and technical assistance as we too actively pursue the technology dividend.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to overcoming the Digital Divide. Two areas of particular concern for us are access and affordability. With regard to universal access, Trinidad and Tobago through its national information and communication technology plan, referred to as *"fastforward"* is focusing on rural areas, the impoverished, disadvantaged urban communities, the physically challenged and the full participation

of women and girls. *fastforward* is founded on the principles of inclusiveness, universality and equity.

With respect to affordability, we are in the process of liberalising our telecommunications market in order to secure lower prices and better services. Building on the issue of affordability, I must emphasise that ours is a small market and the providers in that market can only offer prices based on the international access rates they are able to negotiate. Access to communications and the cost of connectivity for ICT services and applications continue to be a challenge for small states such as ours. We therefore urge the global community to commit to implementing the recommendations for improving existing financial mechanisms outlined in the Tunis Agenda.

Mr President, Trinidad and Tobago fully embraces the concepts of sovereignty, individual rights and freedoms and the tenets of free enterprise. In our view there cannot be domination by any one party in the development of guidelines for Internet Governance, in the international arena. Accordingly, we call for a spirit of multilateralism to be infused in all future deliberations on Internet Governance.

Further, we agree with the importance attributed to partnerships among all stakeholders: the public sector, business and civil society, in the development of any Internet Governance framework.

Mr President, this second phase of WSIS provides a useful opportunity for ensuring that tangible benefits accrue to the global community particularly the developing world. This can only take place if the principles and objectives to which we have agreed, are translated into meaningful action. Let us build on the momentum of this Summit to maximize the strengths of all and enhance our possibility for a brighter, unified, people-centred, global information society.

Lastly, and by no means least, may I take this opportunity to say “Chokran Jazilan” to the Government and People of the Republic of Tunisia, our immediate neighbours in the UN system, for their kind generosity and hospitality.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen