

**SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**  
**STATEMENT BY H.E YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI**  
**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

The President, World Summit on the Information Society,  
The Secretary General ITU,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me much pleasure and honour to address this World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). I bring heartfelt greetings and salutations from H.E. the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the Government and the people of Uganda.

My delegation present here is indeed happy to be associated with this Summit where world leaders are gathered to chart out an all-inclusive information society.

On behalf of the Government of Uganda, I wish to convey our gratitude to H.E. the President of Tunisia, Ben Ali, for accepting to host the second phase of WSIS and for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation by the Government and people of Tunisia since we arrived in this beautiful and historic Mediterranean city of Tunis.

I also wish to add my gratitude to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for its leading role in coordinating the activities and logistics that have culminated into the convening of this summit. Special thanks go to the Secretary General and his team for their commendable work.

I recall with satisfaction the successful December 2003 Geneva Summit where we adopted the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, which will guide us in building an all-inclusive information society.

As a developing country, Uganda faces enormous challenges in our quest to achieve the WSIS objectives so as to fully reap maximum benefits from the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies (ICTs).

In 1996 my Government put in place the communication policy whose main objective was to attract private investment by creating a conducive policy and regulatory environment. We have

since witnessed tremendous growth of the sector in terms of growth in the customer base which has grown by a factor of over 20 times. A variety of services in the market are also offered.

In order to ensure equitable access to ICTs in the country, Uganda pioneered in Africa, the development of a policy on universal access for communications leveraged through the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF), covering both telephone and ICTs.

RCDF operates on the principles of internationally accepted best practices for allocating “smart subsidies” to private sector companies that wish to serve the universal access market. I am pleased to note that to-date, through the RCDF, a substantial number our people living in rural areas now have access to basic ICT services.

Furthermore, in 2003, the Government approved the National ICT Policy geared to exploring the use of ICTs in governance, business, education, health and agriculture so as to improve the quality of life for everybody irrespective of sex, age or social status.

This Summit comes at an opportune moment when the Government of Uganda has prioritised easy access to relevant information and efficient communications in achieving human development. We hope this event will be another milestone in our ICT-driven socio-economic development.

Turning to the theme - financing mechanisms and Internet governance - my Government is optimistic that this Summit will reach a consensus on the pertinent issues underlying this event. We believe in a win-win situation.

In line with achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as set out by the United Nations in 2000, Uganda has gone a long way in ensuring sustainable national development through availability and access to reliable, cost effective, and affordable communications services largely delivered through an enabled private sector.

My Government attaches a lot of importance to ICTs and has consequently identified it as a priority area for funding under the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) through provision of timely and relevant information.

The Government of Uganda was quick to recognise the need for special measures in the reform process if the majority rural-based Ugandans (80 percent of the estimated 26 million people) were to access affordable communication services. Besides, there is a positive linkage between communications and poverty reduction.

Despite the excellent sector performance, Uganda’s walk down the ICT road has not been without challenges. Worth noting is the fact that Uganda is not only a landlocked country but “e-landlocked” as well - without direct access to the international fibre backbone. This poses a tremendous bottleneck to Uganda's access to the global information society.

It is for this reason that Uganda strongly supports the various regional initiatives to provide a submarine fibre optic cable system for Eastern and Southern Africa (EASSY Project) in order to lower the costs of communications to the rest of the world. In this regard, we call upon our development partners to support this regional initiative, which aims at providing a backbone ICT

infrastructure.

On Internet governance, we support the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making mechanism related to the Internet.

We further call for international collaboration in the fight against misuse of the Internet through such practices as spam, pornography and cyber crime, which undermine the enormous benefits presented by the Internet.

Uganda welcomes and supports the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund, which should help us address the inequalities in the use of ICTs so that we all move together towards the realisation of a truly global and all-inclusive Information Society.

The future of the ICT sector in Uganda is bright. The Government is committed to ensuring favourable policies and strategies that promote the participation of the private sector in a competitive environment.

We believe this Summit will go a long way in fulfilling the realisation of our noble objectives. The success of this Summit is our success.

I thank you for your attention.