

**SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS  
STATEMENT FROM THE TELECENTRE CAUCUS  
FLORENCE E ETTA, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH  
CENTRE**

Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Telecentre Caucus and the World Summit on the Information Society Gender Caucus (WSIS Gender Caucus), I thank firstly, the Executive Secretariat of WSIS for offering us these 3 minutes, and secondly, CONGO for ensuring that it happened. I speak on behalf of the global telecentre movement, telecentre project implementers and for all telecentre users.

Information and communication technologies represent one of the greatest achievements of human civilisation and they have immense potential for doing good or evil for human development. The new ICTs (Internet, mobile phones etc) have a short history which is inversely proportional to the impact that they have had on the world, on work and on lives. But 1/2 the people on earth have no telephone and 1/4 have not made one phone call in their entire lives.

Telecentres, described by the World Bank in 2000 as a promising new model for deployment of services to marginalized communities are the schools, hospitals, agric extension offices and community centres of the future. But this journey to tomorrow must start everywhere today, infact, NOW. The creative deployment of telecentres could guarantee that ICTs do not accentuate human disadvantage but enhance societal development. Telecentres could marry the knowledge of science and scientific discovery to the wisdom and ingenuity of indigenous practices. Telecentres could bring meaning, relevance and practicality to conversations across and between cultures. Telecentres could reduce the digital gap; nay divide between the north and south, centre and the periphery, rural and urban. literate and illiterate, rich and poor, young and old and above all men and women.

This great gift of humanity can be used to ensure equality and greater inclusion (social and gender justice), greater productivity as well as better livelihoods for the entire world. The big question is; **Will we allow it? Can we summon the political will and economic resources to make it happen?**

Your excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Telecentre Caucus, and the WSIS gender Caucus, I exhort you all today to support better policies, more funding, appropriate and efficient organisational arid Implementation mechanisms which will help the release the transformative power of telecentres. A vital ingredient to ensure social change through the telecentre is the spirit to work together for the collective good of those who cannot be here today but whose lives will change for the better because of a Telecentre within walking distance of their abodes no matter where in the world they might happen to live.

**Thank you all for your attention.**