



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. SYAMSUL MU`ARIF
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
BEFORE THE FIRST PHASE OF
THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Geneva, 12 December 2003

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to address this Summit on the "Information Society", a pivotal issue that is constantly redefining the global socio-economic structures in every walk of life. Before going any further, allow me, on behalf of the Government of Indonesia, to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Government of the Confederation of Switzerland for hosting this important Conference of the First Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, and for assuming the presidency of these proceedings so efficiently. I am confident that under your able leadership, Mr President, our deliberations will move us closer to bridging the digital gap threatening to progressively estrange the richer and poorer world communities. Let me also congratulate the Secretary General of ITU and the President of the Prepcom on their efforts and their determination to make the Summit a success.

Mr. President,

At the United Nations Millennium Summit 2000, a set of quantifiable goals were agreed under the Millennium Development Goals as a coherent framework on which to focus our efforts. Under the "global partnership development" goal, the private sector has a role to play in ensuring that all people benefit from new technology, particularly information and communication technology (ICT). Extensive innovations have occurred in ICT over the past twenty years which have not only helped the dynamics of globalisation, but have also shaped the so-called information society. The pace of technological innovation has been such that the inhabitants of the industrialized countries have enjoyed the full benefits of the information society since the end of the twentieth century. In stark contrast, the vast majority of the developing countries meanwhile have lagged behind, and telecommunication is still regarded there as a luxury available only to a privileged few.

Concerned at the growing digital divide, Indonesia has been following closely the various steps taken by countries around the world in addressing the inevitable move towards an information-centred society. The Government of Indonesia trusts in the

power of ICT to boost economic, social and cultural development in the attainment of sustainable development and believes it could also facilitate efforts to fight against poverty, promote equality and gender empowerment. On the downside however, there is lingering concern that ICT could still further marginalize the developing countries and thus continue to widen the gap between developed and developing countries, and between developing countries themselves. If the latter are not to be denied the attainment of the knowledge-based society to which they aspire, all governments must show the highest commitment and political will in addressing this important issue. Bridging this digital divide is therefore of crucial importance both to us and to the international community. On this basis, immediate and concrete measures at all levels must imperatively be enacted to bridge the digital divide and develop digital opportunities, as well as making ICT an essential aspect of development in all sectors. These efforts should, however, respect the reality of cultural, linguistic, traditional, and religious diversity in such a way as to make ICT an instrument of dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

With Indonesia's assumption of the Presidency of ECOSOC in 2000 and with the realisation that the lives of billions of people were still untouched by the digital revolution, a special effort was made to emphasize the importance of ICT at all levels. At the end of the ensuing discussions, Ministers adopted the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration which recognised the key role of partnership in advancing development and which called on the international community to cooperate towards creating digital opportunity for all. However, in order to do this, the industrialized countries must first agree to a transfer of technology, a concept which has yet to move beyond a set of hollow political promises and into effective implementation. In this task, our most striking problem is the lack of technological capacity.

Other challenges stand in our path towards this goal, notably the fact that developing countries have restricted access to technology owned by the developed countries. An example is the intellectual property rights which developed countries frequently use to protect this access. May we therefore urge that a harmonious balance be found between protection and access. Likewise, we must underscore the fact that narrowing the gap would best be accomplished by opening access to ICT to developing countries, and by making it affordable for them.

Connectivity is another element which is of paramount importance if the implementation of ICT is to become generalised. The latest technological advances have completely changed the face of global telecommunication, yet most of the countries in the region have not fully grasped the huge potential advantages which can be derived from a conducive ICT environment. We therefore have to establish an appropriate strategy in order that such an environment may be created and digital opportunity become available to all countries. Here again, at the risk of repeating myself – but this cannot be overemphasised – cooperation of the closest kind between all countries in the region will be necessary if optimal results are to be achieved in securing a truly enabling environment

Infrastructure is another major challenge, which can only be addressed by taking into account a number of aspects, most notably those relating to rural areas. Thus, the infrastructures that need to be built in such areas should feature technology which is applicable to and suitable with rural requirements. In order to do so, we must assess and raise the degree of ICT literacy within the population through the creation of appropriate infrastructures. In this regard, the deployment strategy concerning these infrastructures must be properly defined and such segments of the population as women, children, disabled people or other vulnerable groups are catered for and provided with infrastructures that are fit for them.

In the same vein, *local content* should be continually up-dated. Considering the diversity of our region, the development of content should be relevant and applicable to the conditions in different countries and their individual needs. We have to respect the norms and values of individual countries as well as their stage of development.

In a globalizing world, ICT, and more particularly the Internet, should be used to strengthen our cultural identity and to promote dialogue among civilizations in order to establish a mutual understanding leading to greater tolerance and solidarity. Having said this, the Internet may also be used irresponsibly for defamatory purposes or for the propagation of extreme religious and ideological views. Such a misuse could be extremely damaging to our values and norms.

Another key issue is *that of financing*. The success of the measures outlined above depend on the readiness of the developed countries and the international financial institutions to assist developing countries as well as on the true commitment of the international community to the fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration's stated principle whereby the benefits of ICT should be available to all.

Mr. President,

The Government of Indonesia, for its part, continues to promote the necessary policies on technology development geared towards achieving an informed society. As a country with more than 17,000 islands, 210 million people and over 5000 cultures, Indonesia has nevertheless devised laws, programs and initiatives focussed on these realities, while still promoting democracy, transparency and accountability. The government has recently passed the Law on the Press, the Law on Broadcasting, and is currently preparing a Law on Freedom of Information. In this context, we welcome the assistance extended to us by a number of countries to help us build up our infrastructures. We look forward to further cooperation, in particular with regard to our efforts to promote our own affordable technologies designed to make the promotion of the information society in rural areas an integral part of the government's policies and strategies.

To conclude, Mr President, we all recognise that the building of a global information society requires international consensus and cooperation and that the participation of all stakeholders is instrumental in giving people access to the well-informed society to which they aspire. Most, if not all, of us present have high expectations that this Summit will create greater connectivity at all levels, and that it will be our cue to sharing our knowledge and to devising the strategies required to build the information society we need and want. Finally, towards that aim and as we wrap up the Summit today, let me pledge the Government of Indonesia's support for and participation in the second phase of the WSIS scheduled to be held in Tunis in 2005, by which time we hope that meaningful ground will have been covered.

Thank you.