

AUSTRALIA

Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Australia has come to the World Summit on the Information Society committed to making progress towards building information economies and societies for all nations and in all regions of the globe.

The World Summit provides a unique opportunity for nations to come together to share their knowledge, experiences and resources to create a global Information Economy and Society.

But we should not see information and communication technologies (ICT) as an end in itself. Nor should it be seen or promoted as some form of panacea.

The challenge for all nations is to integrate ICT effectively into the development of their economies and societies and to be prepared to share experiences and knowledge of 'what works and why'.

In the lead-up to the Summit, Australia actively participated in the Asia-Pacific regional conference on the WSIS in January 2003.

Australia has a long history of cooperation in sharing knowledge and resources with its many neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Tokyo Declaration confirmed the Asia-Pacific region's commitment to the underlying principles of the WSIS while at the same emphasising the unique features of the region.

It highlighted the special circumstances of small island nations in the region and their vulnerability to exclusion from the economic and social benefits of ICT.

Australia is working through its Virtual Colombo Plan to assist developing countries in the region to integrate information and communication technologies effectively into their national development and poverty-reduction strategies.

The Australian Government is demonstrating some of its achievements in ICT development in the Asia-Pacific region and with Australian Indigenous communities through its participation this week in the ICT4D Platform.

Australia is also pleased to be participating in the Global Forum on Indigenous People and the Information Society taking place in Geneva this week.

Information and communication technologies have enabled Australia to transcend its remote global geography and connect to global markets, and to also traverse its vast inner spaces to enable communication between communities.

Australia, therefore, has much to gain from using ICT effectively to form strong connections to the global online community, while also using them as a platform for producing domestic economic and social dividends.

Australia has transformed itself into a successful information economy and society in the Asia-Pacific region and on the international stage.

However continued success cannot be taken for granted.

Australia is working to create and mobilise new capabilities, remove obstacles to further development and promote Australia's interests in the emerging global information economy.

Australia is actively engaged in a process of transforming government business processes and service delivery through the effective use of information and communication technologies to achieve benefits for its citizens.

The potential benefits from technological advances however present as many challenges, and even threats, as they do opportunities.

A major priority for Australia is securing its economy and society against external and internal threats such as fraud, deception, spam and cyber-crime.

Australia welcomes the inclusion of these important topics in the Action Plan for the WSIS.

Fraud and deception online, particularly the advent of spam, will if left unchecked seriously compromise the gains that can be made by the adoption and effective use of information and communication technologies.

Similarly, attacks through mischief or malice on the security of the networks and systems that underpin viable electronic commerce, government and community services must be resisted and prevented.

The Australian parliament has this month passed anti-spam legislation which provides an appropriate balance between the rights of consumers and businesses.

Australia is pursuing the development of multilateral mechanisms in the OECD and in APEC to deal with spam and encourages other countries and industry leaders to undertake anti-spam activities.

The Australian Government has also supported the development of global watch and warning mechanisms and the development of e-security projects in the Asia-Pacific region to assist countries build their capacity and awareness.

The Australian Government also places priority on safeguarding the rights of individual consumers and citizens in the online environment, in particular personal privacy and adequate consumer protection online.

There also remain challenges on how nations and corporations cooperate to develop and maintain consistent and common standards and protocols to support a global Internet regime.

Australia is a strong advocate of the importance of internationally agreed open and flexible interoperability standards as an essential underpinning for effective global electronic commerce.

In this regard, Australia supports the Joint Ministerial Declaration on *Electronic Commerce for Development*, endorsed at the Joint UNCTAD-UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Conference held in November 2002.

Australia also acknowledges the importance of an Internet Governance regime that represents the interests and concerns of all parties while also maintaining an agreed international approach to this work.

Australia recognises ICANN and its constituent body the GAC as the best currently available organisation for this purpose.

Australia strongly supports an on-going ICANN reform process to enable it to best perform this role.

Australia also supports a process of discussion, review and evaluation to internationalise Internet governance. This process should examine better representation of the legitimate policy interests of all sovereign governments.

Australia looks forward to working towards the second phase of the WSIS and on progress in developing effective national and regional e-strategies.

The Australian Government's perspective and its resolve is that these difficult systemic, structural, regulatory and equity issues cannot be solved unilaterally. They are common problems requiring an agreed, shared response.

The Australian Government is committed to continuing to work with its regional partners in the Asia-Pacific and with international organisations to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves today.