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**... Canadian Statement to the  
World Summit on the Information Society**

**delivered by**

**the Honourable Sergio Marchi  
Canadian Ambassador to  
the Office of the United Nations in Geneva and the World Trade Organization**

**Geneva, December 12, 2003**

**Déclaration canadienne prononcée lors du Sommet mondial sur  
la société de l'information**

**par**

**l'honorable Sergio Marchi  
Ambassadeur du Canada auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève  
et de l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce**

**Genève, le 12 décembre 2003**

CANADA

**CANADIAN STATEMENT TO THE**  
**WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen - it is a privilege to address you today on behalf of the government and people of Canada.

As you may know, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, who has been Prime Minister of Canada for the past 10 years, is retiring from public life this week. Two of his top priorities have been to transform Canada into an information society, and to help the international community bridge the gap between developed and developing countries. He launched a process that will double Canada's international assistance before the end of this decade. His commitment to Africa is well known.

His successor, the Honourable Paul Martin, is also well recognized for his work with developing countries. He is the founding chair of the G-20, and co-chair of the United Nations Commission on the Private Sector and Development.

In seeking to build an information society, Canada has looked for new ways to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) to support economic, social and cultural development, through the combined partnerships of government, the private sector and civil society.

Today, Canada is one of the most connected countries in the world. We are global leaders in connecting schools, communities and governments in every part of our vast land. Although we are one of the leading countries for broadband connectivity, we have pledged to ensure that high-speed services are available in every Canadian community - including our remote areas and our northern regions. We are also leaders in content, in e-government, e-learning, e-commerce and many other applications. The Canadian contribution to internet content is made in English, French and several indigenous languages. This practice demonstrates that a society can use technology to foster cultural diversity.

I encourage all delegates to visit Canada's showcase pavilion in Hall 4. There, you will discover demonstrations ranging from culturally enriching applications of technology to "high tech" medical applications. You will see inspiring examples of how First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada have used ICTs to help preserve indigenous knowledge and traditional cultures, while taking full advantage of the economic and social opportunities of the modern world.

On December 10, Canada was delighted to co-host the World Summit Awards which celebrated creativity and excellence in e-content. At our pavilion, you can see examples of Canadian ingenuity in the 8 separate awards categories, all of which highlight our bilingual and multi-cultural approach and where five of the eight e-content award winners are women.

Internationally, we are proud of the contributions we have made to ICTs for development (ICT4D) through the G8, the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies, and the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). I also want to highlight the pioneering work done by Canada's International Development Research Centre with researchers from the South.

**At the last Summit of the Americas, Canada committed \$20 million to the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas. And at the G8 meeting in Kananaskis, Alberta, we committed \$35 million to ICT initiatives in Africa, focusing on ICT policies, connectivity and entrepreneurship support.**

**In this regard, I am pleased to note that Canada supports the creation of a global ePolicy Resource Network (ePol-NET). This network will help countries in Africa design and implement strategies and policies for using ICTs – to improve governance, to promote economic growth, and to improve education, health care and other public services. It will do this by focusing the creative energies of experts from around the world on the practical problems facing developing countries.**

**Many of us could tell similar stories – of success in building information societies within our countries, of commitments made to help close the global digital divide. In spite of these achievements, our task has barely begun.**

**The gap between developed and developing countries in access to technology, information and knowledge persists. In some regions, it is growing wider. As long as this divide exists, the global information society will not be what we want it to be.**

**Canada's successes in building the information society are, in part, due to the fact that its government listens to its citizens. Before this Summit, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO held several consultative sessions across the country to provide a better understanding of the needs of often marginalized groups.**

**Canada's vision of the global information society is to include all people, everywhere in the world. It must not be a "rich man's club". It must also include those who are now excluded because they are poor. It must not be an "old boys' club". It must include youth, women, indigenous peoples, the minorities, the disadvantaged and the marginalized – in all countries, whatever their level of development. In this regard, the eloquent opening statement by the civil society representative, Kiki Nordström of the World Blind Union, reminded all of us that many accessibility issues must still be addressed for a truly inclusive information society.**

**In that light, Canada also recognizes the value of engaging young people as key stakeholders in the information society. We have supported youth participation at this summit through the youth caucus and through information society campaigns in over 30 countries.**

**We want the global information society to be based on universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Among those, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression are clearly fundamental and underlie the creation, communication, and use of information and knowledge. For us, the media play a crucial role in the information society. We are convinced that content produced by the independent press and by the academic world are essential to the development, economic and intellectual growth which characterize knowledge societies. We vigorously promote fundamental values such as freedom of expression, pluralism, cultural diversity and support multilingualism in cyberspace.**

**The global information society must put ICTs to work in the service of sustainable global development – beginning with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within the UNICT Task Force, Canada is coordinating development of improved indicators within a broad framework to better measure, monitor and bridge the digital divide.**

**These are lofty goals. Achieving them will require unprecedented levels of commitment, imagination and above all partnership between governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.**

**I am pleased to confirm that Canada will play its full part in this historic venture, beginning now in Geneva at the first phase of this Summit, and as we move forward towards the second phase in Tunis in 2005.**

**Let us all pledge to work together to achieve the noble goal of building an inclusive information society, a global village that supports freedom and opportunity for all.**

**Thank you.**