



**Statement
by
H.E. Mr. Petr MARES,
Deputy Prime-Minister of the Czech Government,
Head of the Delegation of the Czech Republic
to the
World Summit on the Information Society**

Geneva, 10 December 2003

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

Mr President,

- I am pleased to have the opportunity of addressing this plenary session of the World Summit on the Information Society and first of all I would like to pay tribute to Switzerland, our host country, which spared literally no effort in making this event a success.
- For the first time in the history of the United Nations, the global community is able to formulate and conduct a coordinated appraisal of the issues which are the driver behind the dynamic development of information and communication technologies in the world and to find consensual solutions.
- The Czech Republic shares fully objectives of the Summit including the declaration of a joint vision of the information and knowledge society. It is not by chance only that on 1 January this year the Czech Republic set up a Ministry of Informatics, the role of which corresponds to the plans contained in the draft Declaration and Action Plan of this Summit.
- The Czech Republic supports the idea of a wide use of new technologies not only in the development of economic and social potential and education, but also in the development of public-administration services. In order to enhance and promote computer literacy among citizens as a precondition of an effective use of ICT as part of their everyday knowledge, the Government runs a National Computer Literacy Programme. The Programme focuses on the expansion and consolidation of computer literacy among all generations. The Czech Republic intends not only to pursue the above-mentioned principles on its own territory but is prepared to supply expert assistance in this field to developing countries in order to help them to bridge the digital divide as it is fully committed to the goals of the Digital Solidarity Agenda. As a first step, the Czech Republic has recently sent a financial contribution of CZK 1 million, with the recommendation that it be used to promote the current ITU programme 'Internet Training Centre Initiatives' in Africa.
- We should realize that our perception of the term 'information society' differs significantly whether we are in Europe, Africa or in another continent. There are relatively few common issues derived from the same source, because, for example, in Europe there is an up-and-running, developed infrastructure for ICT, while Africa often still has to come to grips with rudimentary issues. Nevertheless, the development of the global information and knowledge society is a trend the whole world will pursue, irrespective of the current technological conditions in individual areas or regions. Therefore, this is a great challenge and historical opportunity to fulfil that vision.
- The above mentioned differences in perception of some key issues made the preparatory process extremely difficult and many changes in position of all

stakeholders have been required. There are many important areas for the further development, such as financing, the Internet governance and the intellectual property rights, which will necessitate deeper discussion and hard work. The Czech Republic stressing the importance of the whole area of human rights, aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Mr. President,

- Before I reach the end, I would like to recommend that a suitable platform should be established for the participation of private capital in development of ICT infrastructure throughout the world in the context of the funding of the Action Plan. We should also strive to establish mechanisms for coordination with existing programmes of a similar bent, which are set up and financed by other international organizations than the ITU (e.g. UNESCO, EEC, UNDP, UNC7AD, WHO, and WB).
- The Czech delegation is ready to support the adoption of the Declaration of Principals and the Action Plan, because we are aware of the possibilities and roles of all stakeholders, which should have a positive impact on the education and training of the public and which can foster awareness and knowledge in relation to the requirements of further development in the world.