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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AT GENEVA
HEAD OF THE GEORGIAN DELEGATION
TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
(Geneva, 11 December 2003)

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing my Government's sincere appreciation to the Government of Switzerland and to the Geneva authorities for hosting this very important summit meeting in this most hospitable and deeply international city, to the ITU and personally to Mr. Walter Fust - the Director of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - for their excellent preparatory work.

Mr. Chairman, allow me touch upon a few questions, which my country feels, deserve special attention in the context of the Information Society:

First - Necessary skills and knowledge are required at the national level in order to fully and efficiently benefit from the positive agenda of the Information Society and the knowledge-based economy. To this end, increased capacity building and technical assistance programmes, which take into account specific national needs and conditions, need to be developed and implemented. There is also a necessity at the national level for establishing an environment conducive to the transfer of technology. This is vitally important for creating information and communication infrastructure, which is an essential and solid foundation for the Information Society. To attain these objectives, effective cooperation among relevant international organizations is essential. Equally important is the need to share existing best practices and experience. This will ultimately ensure full-fledged membership of developing nations and of countries in transition in an inclusive Information Society.

Second - National efforts to build a people-centered Information Society in each country, which have development issues at their core, should be complemented by effective international efforts, including by those from international financial institutions. Special priority in this area, along with other vulnerable countries, has to be attached to low-income countries with economies

in transition. In this context we would strongly advocate in favour of the Digital Solidarity Agenda. The attainment of our common global objective to build an inclusive Information Society, to a large extent, depends on designing and establishing effective funding mechanisms that will help to ensure the smooth and full integration of members into the Information Society. Needless to say, we look with hope to the international donor community and to international financial institutions which have a key role to play in this context.

Third - We recognize the importance of the inclusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-related programmes in national development and poverty eradication strategies. They would ultimately contribute to the process of ensuring sustainable economic growth and development. Georgia, with its unique culture, rich historical heritage and an educated, modern society, has the potential to absorb the most modern innovations and to fully participate in the formation of an information-based society. Effective involvement of Georgia in the process of the ‘digital revolution’ is of crucial importance to our country. It will not allow itself to slip into backwardness vis-à-vis ‘information technologies’. The introduction of ‘digital technologies’, and a ‘digital modernization’ of Georgia, is of the highest priority for our country. A ‘Digital Innovation’ strategy has been prepared in Georgia and we are aiming to implement it in the near future. We have also gained positive experience of cooperation with ITU. Using this opportunity, I would like to express gratitude for assistance, which ITU provided in the creation of an information protection system for the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Georgia. One of our future intensions is the elaboration of a large-scale project to introduce “electronic government” in Georgia. We hope ITU will consider this project and assist in its realization.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, a few comments on events in Georgia. On behalf of my Government, I should like to assure the international community that the foreign policy of my country remains unchanged. It will continue to be firmly based on universal human values and principles, on international law, and on principles of friendly relations with neighbours near and far. Georgia will not deviate from the course of democratic development and economic reforms. The main priority of the country domestically remains the protection of human rights and basic freedoms, and the creation of a decent standard of living for the entire population.

Thank you.