

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Honorable President!

Excellencies and Distinguished delegates!

On behalf of the Republic of Korea, It is my great honor to address such a distinguished audience at the World Summit on the Information Society.

<The Information Society and the Significance of WSIS>

The rapid development of information and communication technologies is not only bringing great changes in our economy and society, but is also having a strong impact on the very life-style of people worldwide.

Though the extent of these changes may vary from country to country, the wind of change is certainly being felt across the entire planet.

At this juncture, it is highly meaningful to hold global discussions on digital opportunities and the challenges ahead, which will greatly help people in this generation and future generations.

<Korea's Experience of Successful Informatization>

In the hope that this Summit will serve as a catalyst for maximizing digital benefits, I would like to briefly present the success factors behind Korea's informatization drive.

Currently in Korea, more than 70% households subscribe the high speed internet. About 70% of total population is using CDMA mobile phones.

One factor of principal importance has been the strong political backing and commitment provided by the nation's top decision-maker, the President of Korea.

The Korean Government also overhauled relevant laws and regulations, and swiftly removed obstacles that lay in the way of promoting informatization.

Competition was encouraged in the IT services market and heavy investment was made to develop necessary infrastructures, core IT technologies and various contents as well as application software.

As a result, a virtuous cycle was created for the development of informatization and the IT industry.

In a further action, a move to help ensure that all people have equal access to information, the Korean Government offered free Internet and computer training to 10 million people.

The private sectors played equally critical roles. Telecom companies invested heavily in deploying broadband networks, and aggressively offered a wide range of high-quality IT services at competitive price.

The favourable environmental background also contributed to the spread of informatization

among communities.

Densely populated residential areas of the Republic of Korea are conducive to the deployment of more cost effective IT infrastructure, and a large consumer base of technology-savvy Koreans actually helped the rapid deployment of Internet and various digital content.

In our country, the strong government leadership coupled with individual people and corporate efforts made a giant stride for Korea's building of an electronically inclusive society.

<Contribution to the Digital Bridge>

Distinguished delegates!

In our journey toward the information society, the global digital divide is proving a serious impediment to our progress.

I strongly believe the gap between the technology-enabled and technology-deprived should be overcome through regional and international cooperation through international organizations like ITU.

As for Korea, based on our experience and knowledge, we have embarked on various efforts to span digital inequality between the South and the North.

To cite a few examples, we run training programmes for IT personnel from developing countries, and also dispatch IT expert and policy advisor groups.

And we also help establishing information access centers in those countries to improve the digital proficiency of the local residents.

Korea will continue this endeavor as a member of the international community.

<Korea's proposal for a desirable Information Society>

Distinguished delegates!

In this context, I would like to emphasize a few points that we should bear in mind in order to create a desirable information society.

First, we need to strengthen collective efforts to span the digital bridge. Undoubtedly, sharing mutual experiences will help each country to rapidly develop an improved vision and policy and to properly customize to their own domestic situation.

Second, we should work together to tackle the adverse effects of the information society such as cyber-crime, infringement of privacy, dissemination of indecent material and sharp growth in spam mails.

Finally, it is important to create an international environment that fits well with the nature of the information society.

<Conclusion>

Honorable President, Excellencies and Distinguished delegates!

I sincerely hope that 'the Declaration of the Principles and Plan of Action' to be adopted at this Summit will uphold the spirit of partnership to create an information society that no one is marginalized from the benefits of the digital technologies.

In this regard, Korea is more than ready to join forces with global efforts and to prove itself a good and willing partner.

In closing, it is my wish that this Summit will mark a milestone for the information society, and I would like to give my special thanks to those who have worked hard to make this WSIS possible.

Thank you for your attention!