



**STATEMENT BY H.E DATUK AMAR LEO MOGGIE
MINISTER OF ENERGY, COMMUNICATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA
MALAYSIA AT THE
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

12 DECEMBER 2003

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

To begin with, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of the Confederation of Switzerland for hosting the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society here in Geneva. My appreciation also goes to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for steering the preparatory process for this Summit, in achieving consensus at a global level on the issues and concerns of the Information Society.

In shaping our visions and goals for an information society it is important that right at the beginning we recognize the fact that ICT is more than a tool, it provides a rich environment for the generation, dissemination and application of information and knowledge, enabling the maximum potential for socio-economic development.

Malaysia, is happy to note that the Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan, which will be adopted at this Summit, gives significant focus

on the issues concerning bridging the digital divide. Malaysia fully supports the inclusion in the Declaration of Principles of the Digital Solidarity Agenda aimed at bridging this digital gap by promoting access to ICTs, creating digital opportunities by making ICTs more affordable and harnessing the potential of ICTs for development.

The high cost of ICT services including software and hardware constitutes a major impediment to the global efforts to lessen the digital divide. The recent ITU Digital Access Index has confirmed that there is an interdependent correlation between ICT costs and the levels of development. Countries with the lowest level of telephone and Internet usage have the highest ICT costs.

Thus, global efforts must be intensified to ensure that the cost of ICT products and services is affordable given the reality of the per capita income of the majority in the developing world.

While the value of intellectual property is recognized, it needs to be balanced by the reality of social responsibility. As an option to reduce dependency, the idea of using open-source software needs to be explored and evaluated. Besides cost competitiveness, the use of open-source software can also complement efforts in capacity building and development of local content in line with our commitment to cultural diversity.

Outsourcing of ICT services (e.g. call-centres, data-centres and shared services) can also promote ICT development in developing countries. We should all help promote, rather than restrict, outsourcing. It has been estimated for the US, for every dollar spent on offshore business, the

total potential benefit to the US economy is some USD 1.14. Outsourcing and off-shoring lead to global wealth creation where everyone wins.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The central issue of any global effort to narrow the digital gap is the issue of financing. The consensus on examining the possibility of creating a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund is commendable and timely. But we must bear in mind the fact that such initiatives in the past have not met with much success. It is therefore important that in deliberating the modalities of this Fund, we should consider new and innovative mechanisms.

The idea of a global corporate tax to fund infrastructure development for instance had been mooted and deserves some consideration. In the case of ICT, a global tax on corporate entities can contribute towards financing capacity building in human resources and the development of ICT infrastructure, particularly in developing countries. This will lead towards wider penetration and usage of ICT in the developing world, unlocking vast and vibrant new markets for ICT products and services and at the same time narrow the digital gap.

ICT has a tremendous transforming potential that can both increase the productivity of developed countries whilst leapfrogging developing countries to a level where their purchasing power is vastly increased. As such a mutually acceptable means of increasing investment in ICT in developing countries, should be given due priority.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

In the context of the information Society, the role of the media both digital and traditional is important in ensuring a free flow of information. But it is vital that in preserving the integrity of this role, the information that is disseminated reflects the true picture and not one that is guided by some hidden agenda. To be an effective player in the Information Society, the media must demonstrate responsibility in the use and treatment of information in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

In the run up to this First Phase of the Summit, concerns on bridging the digital divide and other issues which I have mentioned has been the focus of several international and regional conferences. Malaysia in its capacity as chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has called for the development of mechanisms to bridge the digital divide based on a partnership involving states, civil society and the private sector. Similar calls were made in other foras organized jointly by the Government of Malaysia and UN agencies in Kuala Lumpur such as the Asian Forum on ICT Policies and e-Strategies and the Forum on ICT and Gender as well as the ASEAN Telecommunications Minister's Meeting held in Singapore.

Together these declarations and statements offer ideas and directions for effectively implementing the Principles and Action Plan which will be adopted at this Summit. I urge the global community to take into cognizance these views in charting the roadmap for the Information Society for the next phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) scheduled for 2005.

Thank you

DATUK AMAR LEO MOGGIE
THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF ENERGY, COMMUNICATION
AND MULTIMEDIA
MALAYSIA
12 DECEMBER 2003