

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. SANJBEGZ TUMUR-OCHIR,
SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF MONGOLIA,
AT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY
(Geneva, 12 December 2003)

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, virtually every country has already designated the knowledge-based economic and social development as the priority goal for progress. In many countries ICT is increasingly becoming means of fundamental importance to provide government and business services to its citizens. Hence, Mongolia believes that the main purpose of the World Summit on Information Society lays not only in giving added impetus to governments' efforts that have already gained an increasing momentum, but also in drawing the attention of the international community to the widening digital divide among regions and countries, supporting developing countries, particularly their civil society and private sector in using ICTs as an engine of growth and development.

These new means of communication and information are not confined to traditional boundaries. Therefore, the major outcome of the Summit is that it facilitates the creation of a new collective agreement that encompasses all stakeholders and directs their comparative advantages towards the achievement of the goals set at the UN Millennium Summit and in Johannesburg and Monterrey.

Mr. President,

I wish to touch upon some core issues embodied in the final documents this Summit adopts today. We believe that it is of particular importance that this Summit once again upholds the right of every individual to the freedom of opinion and expression and confirms that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In order to successfully create the Information Society, special needs of the poor, particularly those living in remote areas of the world, minorities and nomadic people should be taken into account. We strongly support the position that ICTs are a powerful tool that can be used to further development efforts, especially the goals to reduce extreme poverty, provide basic education, improve healthcare, decrease gender inequality and increase global partnership and cooperation.

The enormous potential that ICTs create presents the most productive means of development for Landlocked Developing Countries, Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and countries with economies in transition. However, affordable and widely available access to ICT infrastructure and services remains a challenge facing developing countries in building the Information Society. Therefore, capital and human capacity building, as well as sources of financing for the provision of assistance need to be addressed in a very constructive manner.

Mr. President,

Mongolia has been establishing the fundamentals of the Information Society for a quite some time. The national development strategy envisages ICT as a priority goal and a leading factor for the social and economic progress of the country. Within this framework, measures are

taken to improve the legal environment, increase the usage of ICT in all sectors of the society and enhance human resources and institutional and professional capacity in this area.

Laws on Communication and Postal Services were adopted, respectively, in 2001 and 2003. A package of Information Technology Laws is currently in drafting and will be soon tabled to the Parliament. The Communications Regulatory Commission and the Universal Service Fund for Rural ICT Projects were established to help liberalize the ICT sector and ensure fair competition and local investment.

The National ICT Committee headed by the Prime Minister leads the national ICT development process with the active participation of both private sector and civil society. Mongolia adopted in 2002 its "Medium Term Strategy for the Development of ICT". The central communication network has been converted to digital technology through foreign investment and ODA funding. Important projects on ICT Park and Training Center were implemented successfully.

In developing ICT, Mongolia with a sparsely populated large territory is encountering numerous difficulties, quite specific in their nature. Providing the public, particularly youth and children, with the computer knowledge, giving them skills to use ICT productively in their daily lives is a paramount task. Establishment of training facilities with required hardware and technology at the school level for enhancing knowledge and capacity to use ICT equipment, to exchange information and to apply modern systems and software continue to be a challenge.

The short term objective that we pursue in Mongolia in the area of ICT is to expand broadband penetration both in urban and rural areas based on the currently existing communication infrastructure, to fully utilize the broadband network in order to increase information usage and, subsequently, to reduce the digital gap between rural and urban areas. We also seek to enhance the legal and technological environment and capacity building in order to fully introduce electronic delivery of the public services.

Mr. President,

The Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action that we are going to adopt today highlight the ICT literacy as a key principle for building global, inclusive Information Society. Therefore, Mongolia puts forward a proposal from this solemn podium that the United Nations General Assembly declare 2005-2014 as the UN Decade for Universal ICT Literacy. As we all know, the achievement of such literacy would benefit all stakeholders: governments, business community and civil society.

In this human-centered century new extraordinary technological achievements are being introduced into the educational sector such as distance learning, education based on Internet. It is becoming a necessity to provide the population at large with computer knowledge. Thus, our proposal aims at creating a global information society that will be successful only if universal ICT literacy is achieved.

Mongolia is ready to consult and cooperate with the United Nations, UNESCO and other institutions and member countries to materialize this initiative.

Allow me at the conclusion to pledge once again that Mongolia will work together with all member countries and other stakeholders to achieve the objectives set at this Summit.

Thank you for your attention.