SPEECH OF
H.E. MAQBOOL ALI SULTAN
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SULTANATE OF OMAN
AT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
GENEVA, DECEMBER 2003

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege for me to have this opportunity address the first phase of the World Summit on Information Society being held in Geneva.

This significant participation by most of the world countries, and at such supreme and distinguished level, is a genuine evidence of the ever-growing importance of Information and Telecommunications Technology (ICT) and its role in providing a more secure and productive working environment. The global nature of the information society means that we are in front of an excellent opportunity that allows all of us to learn from our joint experiences, help each other and learn how to transform failure into a motive to ensure future success.

One noticeable strong trend is the rush by many governments in the world toward implementing the e-government, and provision of the different types of data to their users. However, e-government by itself will not be of significant value unless citizens and businesses acquire knowledge and resources that would allow them to avail such services. Equally, the citizens and businesses aspire for availability of the telecommunications infrastructure and the electronic transactions supporting environment. Above all the objective should be better government services to be availed rather than just converting to e-government.

You Excellency the Chairman

According to the Action Plan, all countries should strive to ensure development of national e-strategies, including the human capacity

building, by 2005.Are the developing countries, and particularly those the least developed countries, prepared and equipped for performing this task? The answer is that perhaps, most of those countries are not. They don't have the means for achieving such objective, and they also lack the financial resources that would enable formulation of a comprehensive policy for the information and telecommunications sector.

It is here that the basic role of developed countries, relevant international development organizations and financial institutions becomes crucial. They should help the developing countries in absorbing the latest technological advances in information and telecommunications field, and not be burdened with old and obsolete technologies, which the developed countries may have abandoned. In this context we welcome the proposal of creating a Digital Solidarity Fund to provide technical and financial assistance. towards national and regional capacity.

Your Excellency the Chairman, Distinguished Participants

We are well aware of the fact that enhancing investment on and technical know-how in the information technology sector alone is not sufficient to solve the problems of poverty-reduction and realizing social and economic growth in the developing countries. A significant share of responsibility lies on the developing countries themselves who have to usher in speedy programmes of deregulation of businesses, fostering economic policy environment conducive to competition, higher productivity, and liberalization of trade and investment. Above all they should direct sufficient attention to upgrading the basic education, so that its curricula should include scientific, technological and technical subjects, as they form the only way to educating new generations, from both sexes, that are to absorb and deal appropriately with the information and telecommunications technologies ICTs.

We, in the Sultanate of Oman, and under the directions from His Majesty have addressed this subject with much attention, and our progress to date has been encouraging. Besides the macro-economic policies adopted in the country for ensuring a high degree of economic freedom conducive to enterprise and investment, we formulated a national information technology strategy that sets the track of the path for the coming years. We

hope that the steps for implementing the main dimensions of such strategy will go according to the plan, so as to achieve Oman's digital society.
In the capacity building realm, we have an ambitious programme in place to deploy the international Computer Driving License (ICDL) to many thousand of young Omanis, which would enable them to acquire the basic skills in such field.

We also recognize our need for high specializations in the IT field at university and post graduate levels, and that is why KOM our Omani High Tech Park established recently hosts two private technical colleges - one being dedicated   fully for IT courses.

Your Excellency the Chairman,

We should all strive to use this summit to drive forward the capacity of individuals to produce, access and share information with others. This will facilitate creation of new opportunities that would allow better standards of living and quality of life and sustainable development in an environmentally friendly way.

In conclusion, let us make this summit a model of cooperation between the North and the South and translate the draft Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan into a tangible reality that manifests all the principles and values of joint work so that our world becomes more free, more secure and more peaceful.

When we meet in two years from now in Tunisia, we hope to make significant strides in achieving what we planned in this summit.

Thank you