

Palestinian National Authority

**Ministry of Telecom. & Information Technology
Minister's Office**

**Address of Mr. Azzam Al-Ahmad
Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology
Head of the Palestinian delegation, before the World Summit of the
Information Society
(Geneva 10-12 December 2003)**

Mr. President

Distinguished participants

I greet all of you and convey to you the greetings of President Yasser Arafat President of the National Palestinian Authority, President of the State of Palestine, whose conditions of siege by the Israeli occupation authorities have prevented him from participating in your summit.

I express my thanks to Mr. Kofi Anan, Secretary General of the UN and to Mr. Adam Samsico, head of the organizing committees and to the members of the committees for their efforts towards the success of this Summit.

This Summit acquires special significance as it convenes to discuss the Information Society at a time when Information Technology has become an essential need in all the countries of the world and directly affects development, higher economic and social standards of living and all aspects of improving the quality of life and the interaction between peoples.

Palestine has made it its aim to strive towards the Information Society in its most advanced forms, not only because of its importance in solving many of the hard conditions of living under occupation and the dissection of our country into separate cantons, but also because of our basic need for Information Technology similar to peoples of the world. The siege policy and the erection of the apartheid separation wall have devastating effects upon our communities, workers, universities, business, etc.

Despite our harsh and difficult conditions and limited financial resources, we undertook a number of important steps to realize our aims. Within the framework of reform that the Palestinian National Authority undertook, the telecommunications and information technology sectors were merged together into the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, the Palestinian Internet Naming Authority was established, and the decision was taken to create an independent regulator for the sector and a revision of the existing laws as well as the preparation of new laws and regulations. This is done with full partnership between the public and private sectors. We work hard in my country to rehabilitate and train human resources with special emphasis upon basic education, enabling the appropriate environment for the development of the private sector and the strengthening the role of civil society.

Mr. President

Distinguished participants

The Palestinian National Strategy for Information Technology faces many obstacles foremost of which is what the Palestinian People faces in terms of siege, closures and dissection of its geographical unity and the refusal of Israel to implement the resolutions of the international institutions as regards the rights of Palestine to direct access to the international gateway, the systematic and repeated destruction of the telecommunications infrastructure and radio and television stations, the control upon passageways and the imposition of restrictions to import necessary telecommunications and IT equipment, not to mention numerous other technical and financial restrictive measures among which figure the control of Israel of our frequency spectrum. Despite these difficulties, Palestine ranks sixth among Arab countries in Internet access.

Mr. President

Distinguished participants

We hope that this Summit will come out with recommendations in the fields of knowledge and ICT to benefit both advanced and developing countries in the fields of development and the strengthening of relations among peoples, the safeguard of peace and security in the world, and the improvement of cultural dialogue and information interchange.

We would like to confirm our support of the recommendations emanating from _ the four regional entities in addition to the recommendations of the preparatory meetings of the Arab States.

We hope that this Summit would be the first step to continued cooperation between the peoples of the world for the development of telecommunications and information technology sectors.