

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES STATEMENT
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE WORLD INFORMATION SOCIETY
UNITED NATIONS

(Version 5 – December 9, 2003)

Your Excellencies
Esteemed leaders of industry.
Distinguished members of civil society
Friends, ladies, and gentlemen

On behalf of Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, of the Republic of the Philippines, I express our good wishes and support for the success of the World Summit on the Information Society of the United Nations. This milestone event in our history represent a strong resolve as a community of nations to adopt a clear statement of direction and a concrete Plan of Action in building a Global Information Society.

ICT development is a priority of the Government of the Philippines. We acknowledge that technology is one of the foundation of a sustainable economic development and that the continued progress of human development depends on a shared abundance resulting from the universal benefit of an Information Society.

The Philippines fully adheres to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the development goals set out in the Millenium Declaration to “fully exploit all the new opportunities provided by ICT and of its combination with traditional media” to fight poverty and gender inequalities. By empowering people, we involve everyone in decisions regarding the development, deployment and use of ICT. The magnitude of the challenge posed by ICT, makes it more important to keep our focus on people- on their basic needs to alleviate their state of being; to enjoy all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the obligations and responsibilities we bear for each other.

The Philippines supports a global Declaration of Principles which adheres to a common goal of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society where all can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, especially our women and the youth, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner.

Today, we live in an era of new forms of solidarity by governments and all other stakeholders to form the landscape of the way we conduct business and plot our collective futures. We acknowledge the need to create an enabling environment where all can play a role and perform their responsibility in the development of the Information Society. Our delegation reflects this multi-sectoral participation from private industry and civil society comprising of the youth, women and media.

The Philippines is resolute in its commitment to empower its poor, particularly those in rural and marginalized areas to enable them to use ICT as a tool to support their effort to lift themselves out of poverty. The Philippines is undertaking the building of Community e-Centers, a common platform for e-Government, distance education, health and other social services. It will be community based with content addressing their specific needs and relies heavily on private sector and local community participation for sustainability.

We recognize the need to achieve universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services. We are fully supportive of new international approaches and mechanism, including financial and technical assistance to contribute to bridge the digital divide, promote access to ICT, create digital opportunities and benefit from the potentials offered by ICT for development.

We recognize that a well developed ICT infrastructure built on a trust framework is an essential foundation for a people centered Information Society. Inherent in this is a culture of cyber security for the protection of individual privacy and human rights.

Our country commits to a Global Action Plan that will be an evolving platform to promote the Information Society at all levels. Towards this end, we look to a real funding mechanism for the realization of a digital solidarity agenda for development.

Finally, we believe that beyond an Information Society, we should move towards a Knowledge Society. Too often we focus on technological innovation alone without capturing the dynamism and complexity of the challenges we face. The task at hand is not only to provide hardware and deploy broadband but more to give attention to human and social systems; address issues of content, language, education, literacy and community and social services in order for technology to make a difference.

The Philippines looks forward with optimism to a people-centered, inclusive and development oriented Information Society. It believes that the world's progress in this regard will be measured by the implementation of the objectives and measures identified in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action. It also believes that implementing measures can be further improved and honed for the benefit of developing countries in the 2nd phase of the Summit. The Philippines, therefore, welcomes Tunisia's hosting of the WSIS Phase II in Tunis. We should take advantage of the opportunity provided by Tunis 2005 to review and build on what the Geneva phase of the Summit will adopt – particularly on the matter of completing the work that remains to be done, and of identifying and adopting concrete and, where deemed necessary, additional measures to attain the Summit's primary goal of bridging the digital divide.

The road to our adoption of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action was a long and arduous one. We would like to acknowledge the leadership of His Excellency Adama Samassekou, President of the Preparatory Committee, with special mention for the Chairmen of Sub-Committee 1 and 2, and the facilitators for successfully leading to completion the work on the two documents. We also congratulate the Swiss Secretary of State and his team, who facilitated the last difficult lap, for their accomplishment.

In closing, we would like to thank our host country, through Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation, in particular, the Republic and Canton of Geneva for their excellent arrangements and sponsorship of this event. Ambassador Daniel Stauffacher, who headed the Swiss Secretariat has earned a well deserved rest. We also wish to acknowledge the role of Secretary General Kofi Annan for his patronage of this important event, and Mr. Yoshio Utsumi and the ITU Secretariat for their tremendous work in ensuring the success of this Summit.

Thank you and Mabuhay!