



PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS
Gabinete do Ministro Adjunto do Primeiro-Ministro

PORTUGAL

World Summit on the Information Society (1st phase - Geneva, December 2003)

Plenary Session

Statement by

the Minister Assistant to the Prime Minister

Mr. José Luís Arnaut

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10 - 12 December 2003



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Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation,
Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr. Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic,

Allow me, at the outset, to thank the United Nations and the Governments of Switzerland and Tunisia for the work they have undertaken to promote this Summit.

We also thank Switzerland for hosting the first phase of this Summit and Tunisia for welcoming us on an equally important second phase.

Recognising the key role played by the United Nations in addressing new challenges and opportunities, Portugal has been supportive, from the beginning, of the idea of a Summit on the Information Society.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

This Summit, as well as its preparatory process, has a tremendously important significance.

Indeed, we are participating in the creation of a consensus that will allow our societies and our governments to approach, together, the challenges of a new evolving world.

As it was mentioned in the intervention pronounced by Italy on behalf of the European Union, we are gathering here today with a view to establish the conditions that will assure the benefits and the exploitation of all potentialities given by an adequate usage of Information and Communication Technologies as well as of the processes and ways of thinking and organizing our societies.

We consider that human resources, more than technological resources, are the most important asset to face challenges and opportunities standing before us.

In Portugal, we want an Information Society based on an informed, participative and demanding citizenship, served by a transparent, light and efficient administration and by a dynamic and competitive market.

During the last year and a half, we promoted a set of measures that, in our opinion, strongly contributed for the fulfilment of the ambition I mentioned before.

Firstly, we institutionalised a transversal approach for the development of the government policy for Information Society, under my direct responsibility as Minister Assistant to the Prime Minister, by his explicit delegation.

We created a Unit Mission with exclusive responsibilities of co-ordinating the implementation of this policy.



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We approved five strategic documents containing guidelines for our policy in this area until 2006, namely:

- The Action Plan for Information Society;
- The Action Plan for Electronic Government, where the ambition is to make the Public Sector the best Services Provider in Portugal;
- The National Initiative for Broadband;
- The National Programme for the Participation of Citizens with Special Needs in the Information Society;
- The National Programme for e-Procurement.

All these documents have concrete timeframes, aligned with what was proposed with the European Plans eEurope 2002 and 2005, giving place to specific projects, grouped into action pillars, with clearly identified entities responsible for their execution.

Furthermore, the documents, one way or the other, put a responsibility to and call on all the Portuguese people, as they are the result of a work that counted on the fundamental collaboration of the Portuguese Public Administration, as well as the market and civil society.

We also launched several projects with structural impact, some of them having unique characteristics worldwide. May I briefly underline four emblematic cases:

- Virtual Campus (also known as "Electronic University"): this project is about a broadband wireless network, installed in all Portuguese universities, allowing an online access to classes, articles, assignments, grades, services, Internet, email and many other features, using students as a means to effectively reach all society.
- Citizen Portal: this is about the creation of a single point of access to public services oriented to citizens, including not only public entities, but also private entities with public services (for instance, water, gas, electricity, etc.).
- Electronic Public Procurement: on this matter, the Portuguese Government considered that it was necessary to adopt electronic mechanisms for the public acquisition procedure, bearing in mind the significant savings that would come from this change and also considering the spread of a clear conscience of a transparent, light and efficient State. The national programme of Electronic Procurement is already running with seven pilot projects.
- Finally, the national initiative for Broadband was launched: structured in five axes of action; this initiative intends to answer the challenges that come with the massive dissemination of broadband, namely infra-structure and access, contents and multimedia applications, broadband utilisation itself, info-inclusion and national economic performance.

Regarding this last point, let me tell you the following: one of the main principles for an effective development of a full Information Society is, in our view, the respect for cultural and linguistic diversity as well as the promotion of national attractive contents.



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Portugal is part of a community of 220 million citizens, speaking Portuguese all over the world. The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries has closely followed the preparatory process of this Summit and has approved, in a meeting that took place in Lisbon last July, a declaration for the Summit, where it became clear our intention to follow the implementation of the action plan that will come out of this meeting, as well as the monitoring of its results, in a process that will take us up to Tunis.

In this European Year dedicated to People with Disabilities and because we really want Information Society to be a reality for everyone, we promoted a set of fundamental measures for the participation of Citizens with Special Needs, in an irreversible path.

I may refer, regarding this area, the Framework for the Development of Internet Websites respecting Accessibility rules, the National Plan for the Promotion of Accessibility and the Accessibility Kit for rehabilitation professionals.

We are fully available to share all these experiences and our best practices in greater detail with other countries.

A truthful Information Society calls for a mobilization of all available public and private instruments and resources, at national and international levels.

In that sense, we consider that the participation of the private sector must be more effective. Without its support, Information Society will remain an unfulfilled dream.

We consider that a regular exchange of information about the initiatives that countries individually take and what is being done by international organizations and agencies from United Nations, as well as by other entities at a regional and international levels, is strongly desirable.

With hard-work, accurateness and dedication, let us make 2004 an year of consolidation of an irreversible trend towards a real Information Society. You can count on Portugal to cope with a challenge that puts a responsibility on all and each one of us.

Thank you.