

Statement
By H.E.M. Ion ILIESCU,
President of Romania,
On the occasion of
The World Summit on the Information Society

First phase Geneva

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Being confronted with problems regarding transition from a state centralized economy to free-market economy, such as weak institutional capacities and also by red tape and corruption, Romania introduced, within the last two years, the instruments of the electronic governance at the level of central and local administrations, including electronic tenders for public procurement. The outcome is promising from the standpoint of costs, efficiency, as well as transparency.

Romania has designed and implemented a strategy of developing of promoting the knowledge based society, and places great emphasis on education. By 2004, the Romanian schools will be equipped with about 500,000 computers. We strongly develop, also in the field of education, the software industry, that we consider a genuine engine of the sustainable economic growth.

Our expertise in the field makes us believe that it is necessary to define an agenda of digital solidarity that should be sustained by mechanisms that stimulate and motivate the public and private actors to effectively use the nations' resources of creativity. The optimal allocation of resources remains a real challenge for the sustainable development of the Romanian society in compliance with the ITC requirements.

Information technologies by themselves do not solve the problems and are not a panacea. They can only intensify the positive phenomena and processes, if used rationally, within open political and economic systems, that seek for the optimum from the social costs standpoint. In other words, the information society is genuinely democratic.

There is a most direct link between development and democracy. The structures of the information society allow for the development of some new forms of social solidarity, community life and direct democracy. We have the opportunity to create a democratic society at the global level, by generalizing the citizens' rights and freedoms and setting up the world wide civil society, as a pro-active factor oriented towards reducing the economic and social gaps.

In this process, Europe, in full swing of reunification and creation of a European identity, is called to play a key-role, by reducing the existent economic gap inside the European continent, thanks to the **European social model**, that mixes the prerequisites of the economic development with the needs of an effective social protection.

The social dimension is a determining element of the Information Society, entailing the existence of some available state-of-the-art public education services and a broad base for the recruitment of the political, economic and cultural elites, as well as systems of social solidarity.

In this context, Romania is constantly improving the offer of the services available on-line for an increasing number of users.

I consider that the WSIS represents a great opportunity for clarifying and facilitating the consensus on the key issues of the knowledge-based society, founded on large public-private partnerships.

By the organization of the second phase of this summit in Tunisia, a clear signal was conveyed regarding the special heed paid by the international community to the reinsertion of the African continent in the scientific and technological dynamics at the global level.

Globalization through promoting "the information society for all" does not mean to diminish the diversity and the vigour of local cultures, on the contrary.

ITC represents, of course, a reliable engine for the economic development. But it cannot solve, by itself, the complex social problems we are facing on short and long term, and, in particular, the big gap between rich and poor. That is why ITC has to be people-centred, by an adequate regulatory framework and by functional institutional mechanisms of the world market, able to address the pending issue of matching economic efficiency with social justice and equality. Thus, we should involve in this process the main stakeholders, the government, the private sector and civil society.

The age that we are living in is not only one of the access to information but also one of a permanent search for the balance between the imperatives of the economy and the needs of the society.

It can be done only by our joint efforts, guided by key words such as: affordability, universal access, transparency, sustainability and connectivity.

Romania is ready for this.