

Speech of H. E. Mr. Pavol Prokopovič, Minister of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications of the Slovak Republic,
General Debate, 10 December 2003, at around 7 pm.

Excellencies, Heads of States, Heads of Governments, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to greet all of you and wish to all of us interesting and challenging deliberations, as well as a lot of success to the Geneva phase of the World Summit on Information Society, held under the auspices of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and under the lead of the International Telecommunications Union.

All of us, who have assembled here, witness to the rapid technical development in all areas, especially those of information and communication technologies that have become driving force of the economic development. However, the technical progress is not equal in all parts of the world. Information and access to information play a key role therein. The era we live in is very fast. But the time has come for us to stop and take a think of where we are going. Where goes the human society - on the global scale.

In the end of the 20th century a new concept appeared: information society. However, few people are able to define what it actually means. What should be the information society like - the target toward which we move and toward which the whole humanity should head? It should be a society, allowing access to and use of information for all without discrimination. It should allow to everybody to use ICT for his or her personal development and for the improvement of the quality of life. It would respect the rights of individuals and groups. It should protect the heritage of population of the Earth that consists in the linguistic and cultural diversity. It should also ensure that advanced technical means of the information society cannot be abused. Such vision of information society is defined in the Declaration of Principles that has been born with much difficulties and its final version is a compromise acceptable for all interested countries. The fact that the creation of the Declaration has not been simple and unanimous only underlines the importance, attributed to the Declaration by the countries all around the world. It is not only a summary of empty phrases but a statement that the signatories take seriously outright from the start and that they wish to follow.

The vision of information society and rules it should follow are laid down in the Declaration of Principles. The Action Plan in turn sets stages on the way toward the information society. A prerequisite in this process is the development of ICT on the worldwide scale and the development of the use of these technologies in all areas of human activity. We realise again that information and communication technologies alone are not the target but the means that will allow us to reach the target - information society for all.

We are thankful to all those who have contributed to the preparation of these basic documents. Last but not least to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the ITU Secretary General Yoshio Utsumi, the chairman of the Preparatory Committee Adama Samassékou and the Chairman of the Sub-Committee 2, as well as to the host country facilitators for their personal involvement in discussions and negotiations, aimed at achieving of uneasy agreements in controversial points.

In two days, in conclusion of the Geneva phase of the World Summit on Information Society this plenum will adopt two basic documents, mentioned above. I believe that it will be a good start for the following period, preceding the second - Tunisian phase of the World Summit on Information Society.

Thank you for your attention.