



Source: STATEMENT BY H.R.H. PRINCE DAVID DLAMINI, ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

President of the Summit, Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, UN Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. President

1. Allow me to express, on behalf of the Swaziland delegation and indeed on my own behalf, our sincere gratitude to the Swiss authorities for the warm reception and generous hospitality we have received since our arrival here in Geneva. I further wish to congratulate the Swiss and UN organisers of this Summit for the excellent preparations and the good facilities put at our disposal for this Conference.

Mr President

2 There is no doubt that information and communication technologies (ICTs) play an important and positive role in all our lives. The rapid development of these technologies has the potential to open new opportunities to attain higher levels of economic development.

3. We are all aware that the benefits of the information technology revolution are unevenly distributed between developed and developing countries because of the digital divide. Therefore our challenge is turning the digital divide into a digital opportunity for all. Our countries should promote the use of ICT based products to help countries overcome the digital divide.

4. This Summit should aspire to build the Information Society not only for ourselves but for future generations as well. Consequently, each and every-one of our countries must empower young people to be future content developers, creators and users of ICTs with the view to bridge the digital divide.

5. The Swaziland delegation recognises that bridging the digital divide is a major challenge particularly for developing countries. Therefore, I support the view that bridging the digital divide requires strong commitment by all stakeholders. In this respect, my delegation strongly supports the call for solidarity in bridging the digital divide both at the national and international levels.

Mr. President

6. The Swaziland delegation also strongly supports the view that capacity building and literacy in ICTs are essential in all our countries.

7. In this respect, my delegation believes that developed countries and financial institutions can play a great role in providing the much needed technical and financial assistance.

8. Developing countries like my own can not take full advantage of the benefits of ICT in the absence of the necessary infrastructure. The majority of the population in these countries lives in the rural areas which tend to be marginalized due to their remoteness. Therefore, the proposed voluntary digital fund should address some of the infrastructural constraints faced by developing countries so as to facilitate access to ICT.

Mr. President,

9. As facilitator, the role of government is to put in place an enabling environment for the development and use of ICT-based products. A dynamic and conducive international climate supportive of foreign direct investment, transfer of appropriate technology, and international cooperation, especially in the areas of finance and trade are essential complements to national development efforts related to ICTs. To this end my country's initiatives in this area have been:

- The development of a Telecommunications Policy;
- The development of a draft ICT Policy;
- The development of a draft Telecommunications Legislation; and
- The assessment of e-Readiness

10. This Summit should recognize our right to development in line with the various UN declarations. In the same vein therefore, we would call upon our developed partners to fulfill and increase the volume of aid under Official Development Assistance (ODA). The economic up-liftment of developing countries has far reaching welfare gains to the rest of humanity as it reduces the social burden on developed countries through provision of more Aid.

Mr. President

11. This Summit has to recognize the need for an all-inclusive global information society. However, this will to a large extent, depend on our ability to implement programs and projects on ICTs within our respective countries. This calls for international cooperation in addressing the technical and financial challenge faced by the majority of developing countries.

12. It is our belief that higher regional integration will serve as a stimulus for the attainment of a global information society as espoused by this Summit. It is in this respect that we call upon our developed partners to support African initiatives on ICTs as enunciated under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This initiative would accord member States and regions an opportunity to identify common solutions in addressing their challenges.

13. I would like to remind that the usage and deployment of ICT should in all fairness seek to realize benefits in all aspects of our daily lives. However, Intellectual property protection, though admittedly important to encourage the much needed innovation and creativity in information society should in no way deny developing countries the benefits accorded by ICT applications. It is in this regard that this Summit should call upon our respective governments especially those in the developed world to ensure that research initiatives on ICTs are appropriately funded for the benefit of all.

14. The Swaziland delegation supports the call for freedom of expression for media in our respective countries. We also support the UNESCO Ministerial Communique to this Summit of the 14th October 2003 on knowledge societies which calls for freedom of the press.

15. In conclusion, the Swaziland delegation wishes to sincerely thank Tunisia for the offer to host the second phase of the WSIS in 2005.

Mr. President,

I thank you.