

**STATEMENT BY HON. PROF. M. J. MWANDOSYA,
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND
TRANSPORT AND HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AT THE WORLD
SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)
GENEVA, 10-12 DECEMBER 2003.**

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations,
Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General of the International
Telecommunications Union (ITU),
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

It is a great honour for me to address this august assembly. Allow me to convey the felicitations of His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania who could not be with us here today. He expresses support to the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General of ITU for arranging this landmark event, the World Summit on Information Society. that we all have a stake in.

Mr. President,

The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1982, put the case for worldwide expansion of telecommunication networks so as to reduce the disparity of penetration between the developed and developing countries in the 21st century. An independent Communications Commission for Worldwide Telecommunication Development was set up by the ITU and in 1984 the "Missing Link Report" was launched in Arusha, Tanzania.

Mr. President,

The "Missing Link Report" demonstrated the glaring disparity in the distribution of telephone lines. Three quarters of the lines were concentrated in the nine developed countries and the remaining 25% were distributed unevenly throughout the rest of the world. The disparities portrayed in the Report still exist today. Developing countries are characterized by low penetration; the least covered being the rural areas. The recent unprecedented technological advances continue to reinforce the disparities. The emerging high use of Internet services has created another divide, a Digital Divide among countries and regions. Likewise in developing countries, a digital divide exists between the urban and rural areas and between the high income and low-income urban populations. Yet technological advances provide a real opportunity to address the divide and a platform to leapfrog the development process towards an information and a knowledge society.

President,

Tanzania has in place a National Development Vision 2025, which envisages the attainment of a people-centred, an inclusive and an information and knowledge based society. A poverty elimination strategy is being implemented as a vehicle to achieving the Vision objectives, which are in line with Millennium Development Goals. To this end, Tanzania has developed an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy and believes that an Information Society can only be built upon a firm foundation of an ICT infrastructure.

There are numerous challenges that we have to face. These include:

- high cost of access to ICT facilities,
- inadequate absorption capacity
- limited ICT based training and
- poor infrastructure

Mr. President,

A number of programmes have been initiated as part of the process of building the Information Society. These are in the areas of e-government, e-health, e-education, e-agriculture, e business and e-commerce. In e-government, the installation and use of an Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS), an accounting system that links all sub treasuries to the Ministry of Finance is an interesting showcase.

We are committed to the East African Marine Fibre Cable and the E-schools projects under the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), and the establishment of a national optic fibre backbone. We realise that only a strong partnership among Government, the private sector, development cooperating partners, the civil society and the society at large can make us realise an information and knowledge society.

Mr. President,

Financial resources will be required in order to bridge the digital divide as we endeavour to build an Information Society. Resource mobilization requires a bold yet common resolve and is a common but differentiated responsibility. It requires new and imaginative thinking and approaches.

In this regard, therefore, Tanzania supports the letter and spirit of Digital Solidarity Fund. However, Digital Solidarity is much more than 'another fund'. Well conceived and novel, its implementation could provide a panacea for the promotion of the use of ICT and the creation of a digital opportunity and solidarity for all.

Mr. President,

The Summit Declaration of Principles underlines the importance of Internet in the global endeavour to harness the use of ICTs that will accelerate the pace of building an Information Society. We live in an era of globalisation where free access of information is crucial for empowering the people, to be able to use shared information in the process of effecting business transactions, thus stimulating socio-economic development. Country level management of internet services through own domain for optimal use is crucial if we have to achieve the objectives we have set. We need to address the management challenges of Internet services so that they become less costly, more efficient and more secure. The global and worldwide character of the Internet makes obvious the need to consider a cooperative multilateral and private sector approach in its governance.

Mr. President,

The media plays an important role in the creation of an Information Society. Tanzania recognizes that communication is a fundamental social process - a basic human need and the foundation of all social organizations. Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and to benefit from the Information Society. Everyone has the right to un-interfered freedom of

opinion and expression and the right to seamlessly seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Tanzania is also in full agreement that Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights goes hand in hand with Article 29 of the same Declaration. Both Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been taken care of in the National Information and Broadcasting Policy, recently adopted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. President,

The United Republic of Tanzania commits itself to the implementation of decisions and declarations of this Summit.

I thank you for your attention.