



NORWAY

PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA, 35BIS AVENUE DE BUDE, 1202 GENEVA. TEL. +4122 918 04 00

**First Meeting of the Preparatory
Committee (Prepcom-1) World Summit on the
Information Society**

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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF NORWAY

**Statement delivered by Mr. Jens C. Koch
Head of Delegation
Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications**

Mr. President,

Let me first congratulate you on your election. I can assure you the full support of the Norwegian Delegation.

The information revolution offers both opportunities and challenges. Poor countries have the opportunity to use ICT in reaching their development targets. At the same time the information revolution may lead to a further marginalization of the least developed countries.

We are facing a growing digital divide. Access to ICT is too costly for too many. Even low costs are too high for the poorest. Poor countries do not have sufficient resources to pay for necessary physical infrastructures, such as hardware, access to Internet, well functioning telecom and powerlines. In addition many of the poorest countries lack the necessary skills and competencies to make use of the new possibilities offered by ICT.

At the same time we have to recognize that ICT may represent a formidable tool for developing countries to catch up, and even leap frog, in their development process. However, if ICT is to serve development, certain basic conditions must be met.

Above all it is essential that developing countries foster an enabling environment for investments and economic growth. There can be no development without sound macro-economic policies, rule of law and transparent governments. In short good governance and credible anti-corruption policies are indispensable. Likewise, open and democratic societies must be in place if the benefits of ICT can be fully exploited.

A friendlier international environment must accompany domestic policies. More must be done to increase ODA, improve debt relief systems and market access. Poor countries need external resources for financing much-needed infrastructures.

We therefore need more vigorous national and international development efforts, to create improved conditions to enable the ICT to contribute in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, ICT should not be regarded as end in itself, but rather a tool for development. We are also convinced that ICT must be seen in conjunction with gender policy.

Norway is firmly committed to do its part. The Norwegian Government has recently launched a comprehensive Plan of Action to fight poverty. The Plan of Action is a coherent framework for Norway's efforts to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals. It covers fundamental framework conditions for development, such as ODA, health and education, trade, investment and debt, cooperation with private sector and civil society. The Action Plan also emphasizes the need for developing countries to create domestic conditions for development and good operating parameters for business and hence attract more international investments. The plan also emphasizes the need to improve fundamentals such as basic infrastructure for ITC development in poor countries.

Mr. President,

The upcoming WSIS is one of several high level UN summits and conferences. It is important that our process links up to what has been achieved elsewhere. We do not need to re-invent the wheel. For this reason we must take into consideration the outcome of other international processes such as the UN Millennium Summit and the UN Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

The UN is indeed well-positioned for addressing the opportunities and challenges of ICT. Through the Expert Panel, ECOSOC and the General Assembly the UN has put ICT on the international development agenda.

We have to create an added value by developing an ICT strategy, which will contribute in reaching already set international development goals. We would therefore need a focused approach, and in that respect my delegation has great sympathy with the ideas put forward by the European Union on clustering our preparations.

In developing an ICT strategy, we need to further enhance the partnership with private sector and civil society. All stake-holders must be involved.

To conclude, Mr. President,

ICT has the potential of being a tool for progress and development. Our task within the WSIS process is to make sure that the information revolution benefits all of us, and in particular the developing world.