

SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. LYONPO LEKI DORJI MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS BHUTAN

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Rapid advances in science and technology have ensured that today, the world, like the Internet, is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before. Bhutan believes that genuine partnerships and cooperation between governments and other stakeholders including the private sector, civil society, and international organizations are essential towards realizing a people centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm my Government's firm commitment to the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, adopted during the First Phase of WSIS in 2003.

Mr. President

In Bhutan, enabling individual citizen's pursuit of happiness has long been the singular and explicit objective of public policy and governance. Guided by His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's noble vision of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan remains committed to pursuing equitable, balanced, and people-centered development. Harnessing ICTs to achieve this goal in order to bring the benefits of development to each and every Bhutanese remains one of our priorities, as well as a daunting challenge.

It is an enormous challenge to build information infrastructure in Bhutan's rugged mountain terrains with scattered settlements. I join other speakers in underlining that for many developing countries with limited resources, the issues of access to information technology, as well as critical infrastructure needs and content development, constrain our full engagement in Information Society. Bhutan, therefore, attaches great importance to Financial Mechanisms, including initiatives that would create favourable conditions for developing countries, particularly LDCs. We urge all stakeholders to support these efforts actively. Expanding ICT access in developing countries, particularly LDCs, takes on the character of a global public good, enhancing the value of global information networks and benefiting everyone including developed countries. We recognize these as representing part of the answers to what the Secretary General has called "Summit of Solutions."

Mr. President

Bhutan is convinced that -- as stated in the Geneva Declaration of Principles of the First Phase of WSIS, and embodied in the Tunis outcome documents we have before us, diversity of content and access in the local language are essential in order for all Bhutanese to tap into and benefit from the wealth of knowledge and resources available today electronically. My government therefore continues its efforts towards ensuring that the Information Society in Bhutan will be as inclusive as

possible, transforming today's digital divide into tomorrow's digital opportunities.

Bhutan welcomes the work of the preparatory process of WSIS on the establishment of the Internet Governance Forum. We firmly believe that the governance of the Internet should be democratic, transparent, and inclusive, allowing all governments and other stakeholders to contribute to its management.

Before I conclude, I wish to express my appreciation to the Government of Tunisia for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation.

Thank you and *Tashi Delek!*