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Chairperson: Mr. Mohamed Cherif Diallo (Vice-Chairperson). (Guinea)

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In the absence of Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Mr. Mohamed Cherif Diallo (Guinea), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 50: Information and communication technologies for development (A/64/64-E/2009/10)

1. **Mr. Daoud** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while information and communication technology (ICT) held tremendous potential for eradicating poverty and promoting socio-economic development, the technological divide between developing and developed countries was considerable. The developmental promise of science and technology remained unfulfilled for the majority of the poor. Creating links between knowledge generation and development was one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries.

2. He lamented the lack of momentum generated by the World Summit on the Information Society. The international community should support efforts to harness the power of technology in support of the Millennium Development Goals and to implement fully the outcomes of that Summit.

3. ICT was a powerful tool for socio-economic development and offered many opportunities to disadvantaged sectors of society. Proper use of ICT could help countries eradicate poverty and attain internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Greater emphasis should therefore be placed on ICT transfer to developing countries and on ICT development and dissemination within developing countries. ICT was vital if developing countries were to participate in the global economy and reap the benefits of globalization. Paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 62/201 underscored a key aspect of the United Nations system's role in that regard.

4. The United Nations system and the international community should take concrete action to facilitate the monitoring and implementation of the World Summit outcomes and other internationally agreed mandates concerning ICT. Increased support to the Global Digital Solidarity Fund and greater emphasis on reducing the cost of ICT and on capacity-building would result in greater use and application.

5. The strong development orientation of the World Summit outcomes remained very relevant to international efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Monitoring and implementation should be pursued within that context. The Group remained hopeful that the full and effective implementation of the outcomes of both World Summit phases would enable developing countries to benefit fully from ICT. The United Nations system must focus on the monitoring of progress and follow-up in order to facilitate a development-oriented information society.

6. **Ms. Becker** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union recognized the huge potential of ICT in promoting socio-economic development and facilitating the achievement of international goals. In that connection, it supported capacity-building, security measures and, in particular, regional ICT initiatives.

7. The European Union attached high importance to the commitments and actions arising from the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. Two specific aspects — the functioning of the Internet and its governance, and the digital divide — had a major impact on development and poverty reduction. The European Union was aware of the major potential of more open and affordable global Internet access and recognized the role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in that regard. She stressed the importance of the fourth IGF meeting, to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2009, and welcomed both the decision to hold the 2010 meeting in Lithuania and the offer by Kenya to host the 2011 meeting. The fate of the latter depended on whether or not the IGF mandate was extended beyond 2010. IGF provided a unique opportunity for key Internet stakeholders to share ideas and experience and to compare best practices and solutions, enabling them in turn to act innovatively and quickly to secure the Internet's continued development, while preserving its dynamic nature. The European Union was therefore in favour of renewing the IGF mandate.

8. The Internet had become a critical part of societies' strategic infrastructure. ICT was an integral part of the so-called economic infrastructure, alongside physical infrastructure and energy. In addition, the Internet could be used to support efforts to address major global and national issues. The European Union acknowledged the uneven availability of communications infrastructure, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the need to invest in building regional and cross-border backbone networks and well-functioning national infrastructure. In that context, the European Union recognized the importance of creating enabling environments, including a supportive regulatory framework and capacity development.

9. The high cost of Internet access in some countries obstructed effective ICT use. National market deregulation and liberalization would lead to increased competition and lower prices. The shortage of external investment funds only increased the importance of national policies and domestic resource mobilization to augment ICT availability. A more developed cross-sectoral utilization of existing Government-owned fibre-optic cables was one solution that did not require huge new investments. She also mentioned the landing of undersea cables in East Africa, which had tremendous potential for stimulating the development of regional networks, and the establishment of national and regional Internet exchange points, which had reduced the cost of Internet access and improved the speed and quality of service, while stimulating the development of local content and promoting diversity on the web. The greatest obstacle to increased ICT access was not a lack of investment per se, but rather a lack of comprehensive investment proposals and a climate conducive to investment. In addition, it was necessary to strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships and to enhance cooperation among public actors, civil society and the private sector.

10. The focus of the ICT debate had moved from the digital divide to the broadband divide. While more developing countries than ever before enjoyed Internet access, the slow speed dial-up Internet impeded the use of Internet services and applications. Even in regions with reasonable ICT connectivity, access could be unequal between urban and rural areas. Such inequality impacted negatively on the poorest. The European Union attached great importance to combating both the digital and the broadband divide.

11. The European Union was determined to reflect the policy recommendations of the Tunis Agenda for

the Information Society in its development policy. Freedom of expression and the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge were indeed essential for the information society. In addition, ICT had enormous potential for expanding access to quality education, boosting literacy and universal primary education, and facilitating the learning process, thereby laying the foundation for a fully inclusive and development-oriented information society and knowledge economy that respected cultural and linguistic diversity.

12. Applying an equal-access perspective, including gender, was fundamental to successfully bridging the digital divide. The European Union would strive to implement the global consensus on the importance of human rights in the information society.

13. Lastly, the European Union supported regional initiatives to develop ICT infrastructure and to improve ICT access. Such initiatives were of utmost importance to improving connectivity and supporting the formation of e-Government, e-health, e-education and e-commerce.

14. **Ms. Wahab** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the development of ICT was an integral part of globalization and essential for strengthening and promoting economic, social and cultural development. Yet many parts of the world and segments of society remained disconnected. Countries must work together to develop the ICT sector and to close the digital divide. In that connection, she stressed the importance of implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and expressed ASEAN support for the Tunis Commitment and the Declaration of Principles — Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium.

15. The development of ICT remained a priority for ASEAN, which was committed to establishing a connected, vibrant and secure ASEAN Community through the provision of universal access to ICT infrastructure and services. To that end, it had identified a number of measures to promote ICT development and use. They included implementing capacity-building programmes to increase ICT literacy; promoting the positive use of ICT, in particular the Internet; encouraging the introduction of ICT at all levels of education; enhancing the use of ICT to

promote e-learning; and developing a workforce with considerable ICT proficiency and expertise. In addition, ASEAN leaders had approved the second Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan, covering the period 2009-2015, which identified the promotion of ICT use as a key element of the ASEAN strategy to promote human resource development. The first IAI Work Plan, covering the period 2002-2008, had achieved considerable progress in the ICT sector. Furthermore, ASEAN was promoting cooperation to achieve a broadband connection across ASEAN. To that end, efforts were under way to expedite the development and establishment of high-speed broadband connections between national information infrastructures in ASEAN and cooperation among key sectors was being enhanced at the regional and international levels.

16. Lastly, she expressed appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other United Nations agencies for their efforts in bridging the global digital divide and promoting ICT use as a way of enhancing productivity and promoting e-learning. The United Nations and its subsidiary bodies played a vital role in promoting and expanding the development of the ICT sector. ASEAN would work with other delegations to devise an effective and sustainable response to the challenges and opportunities of building a truly global information society that benefited all people.

17. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that advancements in ICT had huge potential for economic growth, poverty reduction and socio-economic development in the least developed countries. If used effectively, recent innovations in ICT could be pivotal in solving many of the developmental problems facing the least developed countries. ICT fostered competitiveness, promoted social inclusion, empowered individuals, and lowered the cost of doing business and, therefore, of development. It was, moreover, a tool for education and communication in rural communities.

18. The developmental promise of ICT remained largely unfulfilled for most poor people in the least developed countries. In fact, ICT had increased inequality between the rich and the poor. The disparity in terms of ICT penetration and affordability was huge between developed and developing countries and even huger between developed countries and the least developed countries. The least developed countries

were increasingly marginalized in the ICT sector. The digital divide threatened their pursuit of sustainable development.

19. People living in developing countries, particularly poor people in rural areas, must have easy and affordable access to ICT. To that end, the Tunis Agenda must be implemented as a matter of urgency. The smooth transfer of ICT and related infrastructure was a priority for most least developed countries today. However, if they were to acquire the technology and skills needed to make use of ICT services and equipment, they required additional funds. They should also be assisted in developing e-governance and e-commerce initiatives.

20. The United Nations could play a leading role in advancing ICT for development. Inter-agency cooperation and integrated actions in the United Nations system should be promoted. The United Nations system and the international community should focus on pro-poor ICT policies and applications so as to narrow the digital divide. To that end, more attention should be paid to the role of ICT in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication.

21. The application of ICT for development should be a shared global responsibility. The special needs of the least developed countries must be addressed. To that end, development partners should transfer more technology and resources to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. A just, inclusive and pro-poor information and communications order should be at the heart of development discourse. Such an order would include a broader global agreement on the way forward and an agreement to make advancements in ICT available to all without any artificial barriers, with a strong focus on least developed country needs.

22. **Mr. González Segura** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the countries of the region would make effective use of, and benefit fully from, ICT only when illiteracy and poverty were eradicated. At the same time, ICT could be used to eradicate those ills, thereby advancing internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those on education. International cooperation on ICT transfer and dissemination must therefore be strengthened.

23. The effective use of ICT in all developing countries and their universal access to international ICT markets were key. He acknowledged, in particular, the work being done by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to implement the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the national, subregional and regional levels. He also acknowledged the efforts by countries and organizations alike to reduce the digital divide, in particular by implementing policies aimed at promoting the digital inclusion of developing countries.

24. The development of ICT implied a considerable investment for many countries. Often, such investment was not possible. He called on donors and multilateral organizations to continue supporting projects relating to ICT development, particularly those promoting digital inclusion, and stressed the importance of the commitments assumed in Tunis vis-à-vis financial mechanisms for bridging the digital divide, Internet governance and related issues, and implementation of and follow-up to the Geneva and Tunis decisions. In that connection, he drew attention to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/3, which recommended that the United Nations Group on the Information Society organize focused, open-ended multi-stakeholder consultations on the implementation of paragraphs 3 to 28 of the Tunis Agenda, concerning financial mechanisms for meeting the challenges of ICT for development.

25. He noted with concern the slow progress on the establishment of a more transparent, inclusive and representative system of Internet governance and stressed the need for enhanced cooperation to enable Governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. The Group welcomed the progress made by IGF in that regard and recommended that its mandate be renewed for another five years. Responsible and appropriate ICT use based on full respect for State sovereignty generated common benefits for all and harmony among nations.

26. **Mr. Chen Ming** (China) noted with satisfaction that the digital divide had continued to narrow in 2008; that over half the world's population had obtained at least some level of connectivity; and that 80 to 90 per cent of the world's population lived within range of a cellular network.

27. The development of ICT in China had followed a typically Chinese path. Since the founding of the People's Republic, ICT had changed profoundly, underpinning China's rapid economic growth. China had established a high-capacity, technologically advanced and multifunctional information and communications network that covered the entire country and was connected to the whole world. By the end of 2008, there were 298 million Internet users — 270 million with broadband access — and 2.878 million websites in China. Moreover, third generation (3G) technologies had mushroomed. Chinese operators were expected to invest RMB 450 billion, or \$65 billion, in such technologies over the next three years. Each operator would attract between 50 million and 80 million subscribers, which in turn would generate economic output worth about RMB 1 trillion. Such developments would enable China's telecommunications industry to respond better to the international financial crisis and would promote sound and rapid economic growth.

28. As at June 2007, China's rural areas accounted for two thirds of the population but only 37.41 million network users, compared to 125 million in urban areas. In addition, rural dwellers had at most three television channels, while some administrative villages did not even have a telephone network. For them, broadband access was a far-off dream.

29. In order to implement the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and to build a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society, the international community should strengthen cooperation and narrow all forms of divide. To that end, developed countries must increase financial and technical assistance to developing countries, encourage cooperation with and among developing countries, and promote the role of ICT in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

30. In addition, the popularization of ICT should be combined with research and development. The establishment of a basic telecommunications infrastructure remained the development priority in poor and remote areas. Stakeholders must be mobilized to disseminate new technologies while developing technologies that served the special needs of different regions.

31. Lastly, countries must build mutual trust, respect one another's network security rights, interests and needs, and work together to safeguard information

security. To that end, a mechanism was needed to ensure information security, personal privacy and a smoothly operating Internet. In addition, it was necessary to improve legislation and to crack down on hacker activity.

32. **Mr. Lakhali** (Tunisia) said that his Government was working hard to narrow the digital divide and to establish a national-level information society that was inclusive, balanced and oriented towards economic development and social equality. In 2009, Tunisia's mobile telephony penetration rate had exceeded 85 lines per 100 inhabitants, one of the highest levels among emerging countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Furthermore, between 2003 and 2008, Tunisia had made more progress on Internet access than any other African country. By 2008, 26.8 per cent of the population used the Internet and 2.8 per cent of the population enjoyed broadband access. The broadband access rate in other emerging countries did not exceed 1.5 per cent.

33. Tunisia also performed well in relation to the outsourcing of ICT goods and services. Average annual growth in exports of ICT goods was 22 per cent. The President of Tunisia was committed to making ICT a major engine for socio-economic growth and to make Tunisia a centre for ICT outsourcing. Indeed, there were plans to build a series of technology parks in the next few years.

34. Despite the progress made, the broadband divide posed a real challenge for developing countries, especially those in Africa, and a handicap for companies in many countries, especially the least developed countries. Companies in developed countries were 200 times more likely to have broadband access than companies in the least developed countries.

35. The digital divide had become an issue of quality and capacity. The cost of Internet and broadband access was inversely proportional to the level of development. Despite the progress made nationally, regionally and internationally, all countries were not able to benefit from the digital revolution. The international community must continue its work to implement the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in order to narrow the digital divide and to establish an open, balanced, inclusive and development-oriented information society.

36. **Ms. Silveira** (Uruguay) said that ICT was closely linked to development. Narrowing the digital divide was key to economic and social development, while access to information and knowledge was essential to a fully functioning society.

37. Since 2007, her Government had been implementing the CEIBAL Plan, under which every public primary school student and teacher would be given one laptop and public primary school teachers would be given training, materials and support. The aim was to increase connectivity and to narrow the digital divide, thereby making Uruguay a leader in information technology. The Plan, which was financed by the State, aimed to improve education by integrating technology into the classroom, the school and the home. To that end, her Government had extended Internet coverage to the whole country.

38. Two weeks earlier, her Government had met its ambitious goal of reaching all public primary school students and teachers by the end of 2009. Over 380,000 laptops had been given out. Students with disabilities had received laptops specially designed to meet their needs. Private schools that chose to participate in the Plan could acquire prototypes at a lower price.

39. The CEIBAL Plan was complemented by the CARDALES Plan, which aimed to extend access to information, entertainment, Internet, pay TV and fixed telephony to all Uruguayan families.

40. Lastly, international cooperation was essential not only for resource mobilization, but also for technology transfer, experience exchange and capacity-building. The challenge was to convert inequalities into digital opportunities and to facilitate ICT access for the least privileged countries and sectors of society.

41. **Ms. Bagarić** (Serbia) said that the potential of ICT to promote socio-economic development was considerable. Indeed, ICT enabled development goals to be met far more effectively than before. She was pleased that the digital divide had continued to narrow in 2008, but noted that many challenges remained. The ICT sector was still grappling with the effects of the economic slowdown and confidence needed to be restored. Moreover, much remained to be done if the unconnected were to be connected — and the Millennium Development Goals met — by 2015.

42. Widespread use of mobile telephony must be better incorporated into the development agenda. While

many features required developed markets, some could be used worldwide. She mentioned, in particular, the incorporation of short message services (SMSs) into emergency preparedness strategies.

43. Cybersecurity was a prerequisite for the development of Internet-based services. The establishment of adequate data protection laws and institutions was therefore extremely important. Governments should not underestimate Internet criminality and should take tough action against perpetrators. Illegal Internet activity from Albania had risen in recent years and yet no one had been arrested or prosecuted in that country.

44. The issue of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses must be given careful consideration. IP addresses held important information about users and should therefore be considered confidential personal data. Moreover, in the absence of local search engines in emerging markets and developing countries, some search engines held a privileged position in providing services, thereby widening the digital divide. Furthermore, the problem of tax evasion arose in cases where services were provided from third countries. Her delegation attached great importance to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and hoped that the upcoming IGF meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, would address Internet security and privacy, the role of Governments and issues related to improving access and local content.

45. Earlier that month, her Government had adopted a strategy for the development of electronic governance, which was expected to provide effective and efficient services across the country, and the Republic of Serbia and the European Community had signed a memorandum of understanding on Serbia's participation in the Community's ICT policy support programme for competitiveness and innovation. It was hoped that companies would benefit considerably from ICT and would introduce new products, services and processes. Her Government was committed to laying a firm foundation for the advance of ICT in the country. Indeed, the transition to the information society was a strategic goal of her Government for the period 2008-2012 and a condition for Serbia's joining the European Union.

46. Lastly, while the contribution of ICT to human development, sustainable growth and poverty reduction had certainly been hampered by the global financial

and economic crisis, ICT could strengthen social safety nets and bolster risk mitigation capacities worldwide.

47. **Mr. Shin Boonam** (Republic of Korea) said that narrowing the divide between those who had access to new technologies and those who did not should be a priority, not an afterthought. Africa, in particular, faced many obstacles in increasing connectivity. In addition, its geographical disposition and level of development made it particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

48. Narrowing the digital divide was a huge task. No group could do it alone. Cooperation on ICT was therefore essential, as it offered a new way to address development challenges and to advance the Millennium Development Goals. ICT for development was a key area of his Government's overall aid programme. In 2006, the Korea International Cooperation Agency had spent \$25.5 million on ICT cooperation. His Government viewed ICT for development as a mechanism for helping developing countries overcome institutional and infrastructural obstacles. The provision of access to new technologies through the enhancement of ICT education infrastructure and capacity would promote attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Between 2001 and 2009, over 3,000 Korean Internet Volunteers had given basic computer training to over 90,000 people in 66 developing countries. In addition, Korean Internet Volunteers promoted long-term joint projects with foreign partners and helped coordinate cultural activities aimed at fostering knowledge and culture exchange. Such activities had a lasting impact and were the bedrock for further bilateral cooperation.

49. His Government supported the work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) and recognized the importance of its achievements in the area of capacity-building, particularly human resource development in the use of ICT for development. To have the greatest impact, ICT strategies must be integrated into initiatives relating to health care, education, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) business development, Government services and human resources. Enhanced access to ICT could support more democratic and transparent governance and create an environment conducive to investment.

50. Access to ICT was not only a target under Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals; it was also key to making progress on all eight Goals. The international community must respect the mutually reinforcing nature of ICT and seek actively to incorporate ICT into all cooperation development programmes.

51. **Mr. Farias** (Brazil) said that, while ICT use in general had expanded considerably and while ICT was being given greater consideration in public policy formulation around the world, the United Nations had much to do before it played the pivotal role set out for it in the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. Indeed, since the Tunis phase of the Summit, little progress had been made in implementing the Global Digital Solidarity Fund or any other such mechanism capable of addressing official development assistance (ODA) shortfalls in the area of ICT. Member States should adhere to the Fund and support its activities. Moreover, the Secretary-General was yet to launch an effective process of enhanced cooperation to enable Governments to carry out their roles and responsibilities in public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. His delegation supported greater intergovernmental cooperation on Internet issues, including with respect to critical resources.

52. The building of an open, inclusive, diverse and reliable information society depended on the deployment of democratic intergovernmental decision-making processes. The United Nations was the forum of choice in that respect. Particular attention must be paid to promoting and protecting the public interest, both nationally and internationally. Adequate treatment of cyberspace as a public good should be a major objective. Policies should be discussed and developed to enable everyone to benefit equally from the new potentialities of instant networking. Such issues as free or low-cost access to information, education and cultural goods and the promotion of cultural diversity were critical if ICT was to work for development and poverty eradication.

53. His delegation had welcomed the creation of IGF and had participated actively in its first three meetings. As the review period approached and IGF outcomes became more significant, it was time to reflect on its future. He noted with satisfaction that the upcoming IGF meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, would include a main session entitled “Taking stock and the way

forward — on the desirability of the continuation of the Forum”.

54. The building of a multilateral, transparent and democratic regime for global Internet governance, with the participation of all, should be given priority in the United Nations agenda. While there was still more work to be done, the progress made by IGF thus far had been quite remarkable. The first three meetings had demonstrated that IGF was a living and evolving experience and had enabled areas of emerging consensus to be identified. The next IGF meetings should focus on organizing and examining that mass of accumulated experience and output.

55. His delegation welcomed certain recent developments in the area of Internet governance, in particular the Affirmation of Commitments by the United States Department of Commerce and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which was designed to guide the Domain Name System (DNS) governance regime’s transition from the United States Government to the private sector. However, while the provisions for greater ICANN autonomy and broader international participation in the supervision of its activities were steps in the right direction, the Affirmation of Commitments failed to alter some of the main characteristics of ICANN, in particular the absence of a statute that would grant it international legal personality, or to change the unilateral and exclusive nature of controls over the root directory of DNS. Moreover, the fact that the Affirmation of Commitments could be terminated by any party entailed legal uncertainties. Broadly speaking, issues of voice and participation of Governments and multilateral organizations in matters relating to the Internet governance regime remained unresolved.

56. **Mr. Nirupam** (India) said that developments in ICT had demonstrated the transformative power of technology. The mobile phone, the personal computer and the Internet — a mere fantasy a few decades earlier — had served as critical inputs for development. Developing countries must harness, and be assisted in harnessing, the benefits of ICT. Apart from the growth and employment potential of the ICT sector itself, ICT impacted positively on the development of other sectors of the economy. Moreover, it helped increase access to remote areas, promote markets in rural areas, improve public accountability and enhance access to information.

57. His delegation was proud of India's success vis-à-vis mobile telephony penetration and was pleased that India was being held up as an example for other developing countries to follow. His Government's proactive public policies had reduced monopolies, encouraged open competition and promoted the development of the domestic industry, making mobile telephony costs in India among the lowest in the world.

58. Greater efforts were clearly needed to bridge the digital divide. To that end, priority must be given to developing infrastructure and to making Internet access affordable. He encouraged the United Nations to play a more active role in that regard and called on the international community to increase its financial and technical support so that the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society might be implemented fully.

59. His Government had been active in using ICT for development. The information technology industry accounted for almost 6 per cent of India's economy and had been a major factor in India's recent economic growth. It had also generated millions of jobs, both directly and indirectly. His Government was using ICT to implement an ambitious national e-governance plan, which involved the creation of physical infrastructure, the establishment of appropriate institutional mechanisms, the development of policies and standards, and the creation of the necessary legal framework. Other initiatives included software development in multiple Indian languages and a massive project to assign a unique identification number to all Indian citizens.

60. Despite the global recession, information technology remained one of the fastest-growing sectors of India's economy. Areas of success included software development and information technology-enabled services, including business process outsourcing. Today, India was moving towards a more value added level of outsourcing known as knowledge process outsourcing, which included valuation research, investment research, patent filing, legal and insurance claims processing, online teaching and media content supply. Such activities helped promote global growth and must not be hindered by protectionist tendencies. Lastly, India played a leading role in international ICT-related activities and had taken steps to share its experience with other developing countries. He mentioned, in particular, the pan-African e-network project, which used fibre optics and a dedicated

satellite to support tele-education, telemedicine, e-governance, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services across Africa.

61. **Ms. Semasinghe** (Sri Lanka), noting that only 12 per cent of the population of developing countries as a whole used the Internet, said that the debate on the digital divide should focus more on the specific challenges faced by developing countries, such as development of local content, than on advances made in the field in such areas as bandwidth and data privacy. With few exceptions, Internet access in developing countries was often severely hampered by lack of content in local languages, constituting an obstacle to creating an empowered and inclusive information society and achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). National policies on information and communication technologies (ICT) and the efforts of the donor community must therefore focus on increasing the availability of content in local languages in order to make the Internet relevant and meaningful to poor and disadvantaged people in developing countries.

62. The recommendations of the Secretary-General's report reflected her Government's national ICT policies, which were implemented through the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) and the Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Modern Technologies (ACCIMT). ICTA provided leadership and expertise to evolve national strategies and implement programmes within the Government and the private sector. ICTA and ACCIMT had been working to develop local content in order to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban Sri Lanka and between diverse communities by translating the generic software for Internet access and e-mail from English into Sinhala and Tamil (the two predominantly used local languages); developing trilingual keyboards and fonts; making around 300 Government websites available in the three languages; and opening a trilingual call centre to respond to queries.

63. At the local level, the Government had established 600 *Nenasalas* or wisdom centres to address the ICT needs of rural and other communities and 245 *Vidatha* Centres or resource centres responsible for assisting small and medium-sized enterprises, maintaining databases containing local information relevant to ICT development such as the availability of raw materials and unemployment data

and running ICT training programmes. At the national level, ACCIMT played a pivotal role in human-resource development, research and development and training activities in modern technologies, including ICT, electronics, space technology and robotics. Through those proactive, focused and coherent measures, Sri Lanka aimed to make ICT an everyday facet of the lives of all its citizens.

64. In conclusion, she stressed the need for continued international, multilateral, private-sector and civil-society cooperation and commitment in order to implement the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

65. **Ms. Toutkhalian** (Armenia) said that development of ICT in developing countries constituted a vital pillar for achieving economic growth and improving the productivity and competitiveness of the national economy. Development in Armenia must take account of such strengths as the comparatively high level of scientific and educational potential and strong research and development activities, as well as such limitations as transportation channels, lack of natural resources and a small territory.

66. The Government had identified ICT as a priority sector in 2000, and had established the Information Technology Development Support Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, to provide a link to business, educational institutions and non-governmental, donor and international organizations. The National Assembly had adopted legislation on electronic communication, and a State-sponsored project had been launched in September 2009 which aimed to increase computer usage in Armenia by offering modern computers with software at affordable prices. The Ministry of Economy was currently preparing a decree and road map for e-society development, which would focus on broadband access, Government Intranet infrastructure, computer and Internet usage, infrastructure and security.

67. International cooperation was vital to ICT development in Armenia and other developing countries. Armenia had established excellent relations with prominent international ICT companies such as Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard. The Government regularly organized exhibitions in order to introduce Armenian society to the benefits of ICT, and the first international congress of Armenian technologies had been held in San Francisco in 2007.

68. Armenia would spare no effort in its ambitious goal to become a regional leader in ICT, to create an information society and ultimately to achieve the MDGs, and he urged the international community, particularly the United Nations system, to assist in that endeavour.

69. **Mr. Ahmed** (Bahrain) said that ICT offered opportunities for developing countries to advance and raise their standard of living and for their peoples to become part of the world community. Education topped the list of fields to which information technology made major contributions.

70. His delegation agreed with the Economic and Social Council's recommendation contained in its resolution 2008/3 that action line facilitators, in submitting their reports on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, should bring to the attention of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development obstacles and difficulties encountered by all stakeholders. The regional commissions would continue to support the implementation of those outcomes through regional programmes of work.

71. His country had devoted considerable attention to the information technology sector in view of its outstanding role in promoting sustainable development. In 2007, the e-Government Authority was established in Bahrain by Royal Decree in line with the country's strategy aimed at creating a pioneering knowledge economy and providing information and all basic government services to all clients (citizens, residents, employers, visitors) electronically. The goal was to make the country's e-Government a pioneer in the region, ranking at least fifth in Asia by 2010.

72. A second conference on ICT for Middle Eastern and North African countries was to be held in Bahrain in November in cooperation with local and regional associations and organizations, building on the success of the first such conference, held in Lebanon the previous year. The conference was intended to shed light on the ICT industry in the Middle East and would help to shape the possible future role of Bahraini and other Arabian Gulf companies by raising awareness and offering services and best international practices.

73. His country had made every effort to close the digital gap with respect to the advanced countries and had just joined the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development.

74. **Mr. Jafarov** (Azerbaijan) said that although there had been some advances in improving access to ICT, progress had been slow and some countries still experienced serious problems with connectivity. The process of building appropriate infrastructure to enable connectivity must be primarily undertaken at the regional level and must ensure appropriate quality standards with respect to speed and affordability. Measures must focus on increasing affordable, high-quality Internet access by individuals and businesses, improving the telecommunications infrastructure, fostering social inclusion and strengthening economic development through electronic trade, health and education initiatives.

75. Azerbaijan, with the support of regional and international stakeholders, was continuing to explore ways to improve regional connectivity. The Government had proposed an initiative to jointly build and manage the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway, which would facilitate access to the Internet, telecommunications systems and information resources in the region. The draft resolution submitted by Azerbaijan would be an important step towards cooperating to bridge the digital divide in the region, and the United Nations, regional commissions and other stakeholders should continue to encourage support for achieving that goal at the global level.

76. **Mr. Zdorov** (Belarus) emphasized the need for expanded international cooperation in information and communication technology (ICT) for development, and especially for the sake of overcoming the current financial and economic crisis and helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. That depended in turn on having the right infrastructure, including the necessary legislative framework, equipment and personnel. Organizations in the United Nations system could play a major role in that respect, and in view of its universality and moral authority, the United Nations had a special responsibility to ensure that ICT contributed to development and not to increasing the “digital divide”.

77. Belarus was pursuing ICT infrastructure improvements in a number of ways, including through its “Electronic Belarus” programme and its successful Advanced Technology Park. Belarusian companies were among the leading suppliers of programming services in Eastern Europe, and two of the four largest programming companies in the region worked in Belarus.

78. Belarus would be playing an active part in the Strategy Council of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID). To enhance international cooperation, it had decided to participate in the international summit meeting on ICT, “Connect CIS”, to be held on 26 and 27 November 2009. Belarus also paid great attention to practical regional initiatives for setting up and developing ICT infrastructure, and was supporting the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway initiative.

79. **Ms. Millard-White** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that while there were many benefits to be derived from ICT, the widening technological gap between developed countries in the North and developing countries in the South, with very few exceptions, meant that they were not being enjoyed worldwide. According to the Information Economy Report 2009, published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), although the digital divide was narrowing on the one hand with more widespread use of mobile telephone technology, it was widening on the other with respect to broadband technology.

80. Mobile telephones were increasingly preferred over fixed lines in developing countries; indeed, there had been over 100 million new subscribers in India between January and July 2009. The diffusion of mobile telephone technology had opened up new opportunities for microenterprises, especially in the agricultural and fishery sectors, and expansion of broadband technology to mobile telephone platforms would be an important step towards reducing poverty in developing countries, fostering entrepreneurship and building innovative capabilities in industry. Although conditions in developing countries might be restrictive, CARICOM urged UNCTAD to continue to explore the prospects for growth in the expansion of mobile broadband. She welcomed initiatives taken following the forum entitled “Tunis+3: Broadband, industry of content for development”, held in November 2008, on strategies and options to expand access among low-income countries to low-cost fixed or wireless broadband technology.

81. CARICOM member States must carefully consider its ICT development; indeed, the region’s ICT infrastructure was at a fairly acceptable level with respect to telephone landlines, marine cables and satellite connections. The region looked forward to continuing collaboration with UNCTAD science,

technology and innovation policy reviews, which aided integration of those policies, including on ICT, into national development strategies.

82. In accordance with the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, CARICOM had prepared a draft regional strategy on ICT for development (ICT4D) which set a deadline of 2015 for full inclusion of the region in the information society. ICT4D was an avenue for bridging the digital, social and economic divides in areas such as poverty alleviation and capacity-building. The region's ICT4D objectives included maximizing opportunities for all CARICOM citizens to benefit from the information economy and society, advancing the growth of infrastructure, developing a legal regulatory framework to facilitate electronic transactions, providing training in the skills needed to participate in the information, knowledge-based economy and promoting the community's growth in the information economy. ICT could enhance the development potential of the region; connectivity was one of the main factors that could bridge the digital divide and provide opportunities for developing countries to become more involved in the information society.

83. **Mr. Ovalles-Santos** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), noting that ICT was a useful tool for sustainable development and poverty reduction, said that the United Nations system had a key role to play in the ICT revolution by promoting synergies, coordinating national efforts and providing leadership in reducing the digital gap. His Government was of the view that ICT enabled States, and society in general, to develop an economic system that promoted well-being and progress, a vision which it intended to pursue through active participation in ICT development.

84. In accordance with the World Summit on the Information Society, the Government had taken steps to democratize access to ICT through mechanisms to promote scientific research, social acquisition of knowledge and technology transfer and innovation in order to strengthen capacities for generating, using and circulating knowledge and stimulate national development, taking into account cultural and linguistic diversity. The number of Internet users in his country had increased by 830 per cent between 1998 and 2008 with the provision of over 2,000 public Internet-access centres. Mobile telephone usage stood at over 45 per cent with over 8 million new users over the last six months.

85. ICT must play a key role in multilateral and national poverty-reduction strategies in order to successfully promote ICT development and achieve the MDGs. He called for the creation of an information society that was transparent, inclusive, democratic, multilateral and multisectoral with no digital gap, and in which all citizens could build their own knowledge. The United Nations must focus its efforts on changing mentalities in order for the international community to gain a deeper understanding of how ICT was transforming social contexts. The Simon Bolívar satellite constituted a step towards ICT sovereignty for his country, which was key to social well-being.

86. **Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania), noting that ICT was a linchpin of development, said that the high speed of technological evolution in the ICT sector worldwide was not easy to handle without adequate preparation. His country had strived to keep up with developments by formulating a national ICT policy to facilitate new technologies and thereby enhance socio-economic and political development. Local and international investment in the ICT sector had grown significantly as a result of Government measures under that policy, including the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks such as the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, coordination with other sectors, liberalization of ICT imports and reform of the education system. The new policy had led to full liberalization of the ICT sector, and, in turn, to a huge expansion in teledensity and increased mobile telephone use and broadband access. The Government would continue encouraging the regulatory authority to be innovative in order to ensure that the goal of universal service was achieved in the not too distant future.

87. In July 2009, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania had inaugurated a broadband Internet superhighway linking Europe and Asia with Africa, which was expected to trigger investment in his country and its neighbours and ultimately lead to increased growth of ICT businesses and use in all sectors of society. His country looked forward to enjoying the continued support of cooperating partners in addressing the challenges of ICT expansion, including improving access to ICT facilities in rural communities, increasing human and other resources in the sector and dealing with the energy crisis.

88. **Ms. Filip** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that although new methods of

communication played an important role in governance, they were somewhat less effective in fostering citizen participation in the political process. She called for fresh approaches to assisting parliaments in developing countries, including through better coordination of efforts to share technical expertise. ICT in developing countries could be improved through more strategic use of financial resources from the international donor community, taking into account the need for reliable ICT infrastructures, strategic planning, high-level ICT management, quality staff training, the development of core systems for document management and the implementation of open standards. The next edition of the World e-Parliament Report, to be published in March 2010, would provide a review of the use of ICT in parliaments, and was expected to show that, despite some progress, most developing countries remained far behind.

89. At its third high-level meeting in March 2009, the Board of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament had identified strategic goals to enable parliaments to play a significant role in developing the information society. The goals centred on five key areas: establishing national and international policies to create an equitable and inclusive information society; enhancing the connection between legislatures and constituencies; improving equality of access to national law and the law-making process; ensuring that legislatures worldwide could harness ICT tools; and developing a more robust and better coordinated programme of technical assistance. The goals would be further discussed at the third annual World e-Parliament Conference, to be held the following week in Washington, D.C., which would include sessions on a wide range of policy and technical issues. One session on technology and governance would examine the significant impact of the use of new and innovative communication tools such as social media, text messaging and targeted e-mails on electoral contests in several countries. Proactive use of ICT could help legislators and public officials in general to be more responsive to citizens' concerns, which could in turn affect citizens' perceptions of the relevance, efficiency and legitimacy of public institutions.

90. The political leaders represented on the Board of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament had called for coordination of efforts to support parliaments around the world in harnessing modern technologies and becoming truly representative, transparent, accessible,

accountable and effective institutions. She urged Second Committee members to support efforts to achieve the strategic goals by encouraging better collaboration among parliaments and development partners and better integration of ICT.

Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence

(a) Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence (A/64/253 and A/64/310)

91. **Mr. Montes** (Chief, Policy Analysis and Development Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/64/253).

92. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence (A/64/310). He urged States to take full advantage of the various important multilateral meetings that were to be held over the following weeks, and invited them to consider a specific aspect of globalization on which the following year's report could focus in order to optimize the value of the report to the Committee's work.

93. **Ms. Becker** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that while globalization had brought many benefits, it had also been accompanied by increasing inequalities and the international community must ensure that the benefits were shared by all countries, particularly as the effects of the global economic and financial crisis were being felt most acutely in the developing world.

94. She welcomed the Secretary-General's analysis of the implications of the present crises on poverty reduction and MDG achievement, especially with respect to those MDGs on which progress was lagging, such as Goal 1 on hunger and Goal 5 on maternal health. More thorough discussion was needed on how to ensure that all countries could share in the opportunities provided by globalization and better

support those countries that had been left on the sidelines thus far. United Nations development efforts should promote collective action on global public goods. She reiterated the European Union's support for the ongoing Bretton Woods reform initiatives with respect to global governance, and wondered why the report made no mention of them. Open markets and a strong multilateral trading system — not protectionism — were the key to economic growth and development. The best way to insure the global economy against protectionism was a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round in 2010.

95. Although social protection schemes were increasingly being viewed as an investment in human resources, there was a tendency in difficult times to reduce investment in health, education and social security. That, in turn, reduced opportunities for employment and other prerequisites for inclusive economic growth. Such measures hit poor people particularly hard, and women and girls were among those most at risk. Her delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's suggestion to create a social protection floor comprising essential services and social transfers, and supported the International Labour Organization's Global Jobs Pact. The private sector could play a key role in reducing inequalities, and private-sector efforts to accept and implement corporate social and environmental responsibility should be encouraged. States needed to raise taxes in order to provide basic services for their people and create conditions for economic development. International tax cooperation was essential in that regard.

96. Her delegation would welcome further information on how the United Nations was working with its partners to protect the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society, through such social protection schemes as the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System. Since women in rural areas of developing countries were particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially during crises, the creation of a single, powerful United Nations agency for women would be welcome.

97. Turning to middle-income countries, she said that her delegation welcomed the continued debate on development cooperation, in particular with regard to eradicating poverty, achieving good governance, reducing social and economic inequalities, diversifying trade and building resilience to external shocks. The

efforts of middle-income countries to overcome the significant challenges in poverty eradication that they still faced should be supported by the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other stakeholders. Official development assistance remained essential for a number of middle-income countries, as were approaches that were tailored to their specific needs. She welcomed the World Bank decision to increase lending to middle-income countries for infrastructure projects that could be threatened by future crises but cautioned against diverting attention and resources from least developed countries.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.