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Chairperson: Mr. Pierre (Vice-Chairperson). . . . . (Haiti)

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In the absence of Ms. Ochir (Mongolia), Mr. Pierre (Haiti), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 17: Information and communication technologies for development (A/65/64-E/2010/12, A/65/78-E/2010/68 and A/65/276)

1.   **Mr. Kārkliņš** (Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), introducing the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on communication for development programmes in the United Nations system (A/65/276), said that the report explained how communication for development was implemented by each United Nations agency according to its mandate. It also contained the recommendations of the eleventh United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development held in March 2009.

2.   There was no universal formula capable of addressing all situations. Communication for development and social change initiatives should therefore be based on, and respond and adapt to, the prevailing cultural, social and economic context. Successful sustainable development relied on communication in which the people most affected were placed at the centre of the discussions and decisions needed to guide their development.

3.   Fourteen years following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/172 on communication for development programmes in the United Nations system, humanity was better equipped with technological capabilities not only to localize its efforts on communication for development but also to engage multiple international coalitions to address major global sustainable development issues such as climate change, the water and energy crises and resource depletion, thus allowing the paradigm of communication for development to be shifted to a global scope with potential for coordinated local actions.

4.   Harnessing the potential of information and communications technology (ICT) for sustainable development required legal environments conducive to information access as well as commitments by public bodies to put them into practice. A transparent and inclusive process of communication for development required effective freedom-of-information laws, together with systematic measures to make citizens aware of their rights and officials aware of their obligations. It was in part due to deficiencies in those areas that use of ICT-enabled communication had been relatively marginal in the development process at the local level in many countries. It was time to recognize the power of those instruments and to use them to promote freedom.

5.   Communication for sustainable development should enable people to utilize all societal communication systems in a way that enhanced their freedom to discuss, debate and act in pursuit of their collective well-being, without depleting the resources needed by future generations.

6.   Sustained efforts were needed to create an inclusive communication environment for sustainable development, which at the country level required a free, independent, pluralistic and professional media system through which open dialogue and debate could occur; access to information held by public bodies and development agents; highly educated journalists capable of situating complex facts in their social context; transparent and accountable governance that encouraged public debate; broad public access to a variety of communication media and channels, as well as non-discriminatory licensing for local radio and low-cost universal access to Internet and telephone services; and an open society that allowed all groups and sectors to participate fully in development discussions and decision-making processes.

7.   The "Delivering as One" initiative required United Nations agencies to work together to help Member States foster communication for sustainable development. Specific diagnostic tools, including UNESCO media development indicators, could be used to assess capability gaps and help foster an inclusive environment for national planning exercises, including the United Nations common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

8.   In designing UNDAFs in each country, attention should be paid not only to negotiations between Governments and United Nations agencies but also to the role of other non-State actors and civil-society organizations, which were the real actors in communication for sustainable development. In that regard, taking the United Nations Inter-Agency Round

Table on Communication for Development to the country level would be a valuable first step.

9. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum (A/65/78-E/2010/68), said that the fifth annual meeting of the Forum had been held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 14 to 17 September 2010. The purpose of the Forum was to promote dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders about international public policy issues related to Internet governance. The Forum also made recommendations, when appropriate, about how Internet policies and governance should be implemented. It was envisioned to be a neutral entity, however, and the Forum had no oversight function.

10. Stakeholders at the most recent Forum had described their participation as useful and worthwhile for discussing common problems and learning from each other. The Forum had also indirectly shaped decisions made by organizations and Governments. For example, its work had been reflected in two ministerial declarations, one of the Council of Europe and the other of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In that context, he noted the spread of the Forum's national and regional initiatives since 2006, pointing out that, while all regions had different concerns and priorities, Internet access was the top-priority issue for developing countries.

11. Some participants had felt that there was room for improving the Forum's wide-ranging agenda, which should be more focused on key elements of Internet governance. Others had wanted more attention devoted to development and human rights dimensions, including freedom of expression, gender equality and the cost and affordability of Internet access.

12. Having thoroughly reviewed the Forum's progress, the Secretary-General had determined that its mandate should be extended for five more years beyond the 2010 expiration date. Furthermore, the Secretary-General had recommended that the General Assembly should give guidance on which policy issues to prioritize in the next five years and on the ways in which cooperation in the Forum could be enhanced. He had also requested the General Assembly to have a report prepared for its sixty-sixth session on steps taken to improve the format, functions and operations of the Forum.

13. In his note, the Secretary-General had recommended that the General Assembly should encourage the Forum to create education and training resources that increased awareness and understanding of Internet governance issues; that Member States should provide funding to increase the participation by developing countries in the Forum; and that Member States as well as United Nations system organizations should increase capacity-building for Internet governance in developing countries.

14. **Mr. Hamdi** (Chief, Science and Technology Section of the Division on Technology and Logistics, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (A/65/64-E/2010/12), said that remarkable progress had been achieved towards the diffusion of mobile telephony. In 2010, the total number of mobile subscriptions had reached 5 billion. For the first time, many of the world's poor had gained access to an interactive communication tool. Non-voiced-based applications — including text and picture messaging, Internet access, mobile-money and micro-insurance services — had spread quickly to developing countries, including those populations at the "bottom of the pyramid".

15. However, only 18 per cent of the population of developing countries and 2.4 per cent of the population of the least developed countries were Internet users. Barriers to Internet access included low levels of fixed telecommunications, electrification and computer ownership, as well as a lack of awareness, insufficient skills and high costs. The debate over the digital divide was nonetheless shifting away from measurements of basic connectivity towards issues of bandwidth, availability of local content and data privacy. Cybersecurity was a global challenge requiring global solutions, while at the national level, Governments were responsible for ensuring the security of critical information infrastructures.

16. Online local content was important and Governments could play a key role in improving access to the market for all software providers, as well as assisting open source software initiatives in accessing market opportunities. However, more needed to be done; without adequate responses from policymakers at all levels, there was an increased risk that new forms of

ICT would increase, rather than reduce, inequality. The next five years were critical in that regard and all relevant United Nations entities must continue to work with Governments, the private sector and civil society in order to achieve the goals established during the World Summit on the Information Society. Follow-up on the implementation of the Summit outcomes would require major resources that were not fully covered by the regular budget, and the financial contributions of Switzerland and Finland in that regard were appreciated.

17. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

18. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that ICT was vital for integrating developing countries in the global economy and helping them reap the benefits of globalization. Such technologies had tremendous potential not only for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of socio-economic development, but also for bridging the ever-widening technological divide between developing and developed countries. Still, despite significant advances in new technologies, for most of the world's poor the promise of science and information, including ICT, remained unfulfilled. It was therefore vital to promote the transfer of those technologies to developing countries.

19. The World Summit on the Information Society, had been held to meet the challenge of the digital divide facing developing countries and the Group hoped that its implementation would bring the desired outcomes. The information society was crucial for achieving development objectives by bridging both the digital and development divides.

20. The Group took note of the report of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO, which called for broadband-friendly practices and policies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to ensure that the potential of broadband connectivity and content were at the service of development.

21. The Group attached great importance to the Internet Governance Forum and therefore supported its continuation for five more years. Owing to its multi-stakeholder nature, the Forum had been very useful in providing a framework for an open dialogue on public policy issues related to the Internet, including through the establishment of regional Internet governance forums.

22. The Group looked forward to the report of the working group to be established by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which would review inputs and improvements to the Internet Governance Forum. It also stressed that the group should be established in an open and inclusive manner, in accordance with resolution 2010/2 of the Economic and Social Council, in order to allow all parties to contribute to its work. Further attention should also be paid to enhancing the participation of relevant stakeholders from developing countries in all future Forum meetings.

23. Lastly, the large gaps that remained in ICT access and affordability must be closed. The quality and quantity of existing telecommunication infrastructure in developing countries must be upgraded and greater emphasis should be placed both on reducing the costs of such technologies, including broadband connections, and on capacity-building for greater use and application in the developing world.

24. **Mr. Charlier** (Belgium), 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, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that two specific aspects had a major impact on development and poverty reduction: Internet governance and the digital divide. In the five years since the World Summit on the Information Society, the Internet Governance Forum had fully demonstrated the value of the non-decision-making, multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the public policy issues and challenges relating to the Internet. The high number of participants — including Governments, the private sector and civil society — had proven the suitability of the multi-stakeholder model to the bottom-up dynamics and diversity of the Internet.

25. The European Union supported the extension of the Forum's mandate for another five years and believed that the Forum should continue under its present mandate in a way that preserved its main characteristics while also upholding the provisions of

paragraph 77 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

26. Increased remote participation in the Forum was welcome because it allowed stakeholders with limited travel funds to follow its proceedings. Another welcome development was the higher priority given to development by addressing capacity-building, access and affordability issues. The European Union looked forward to discussing other potential improvements to the Forum in the working group.

27. The European Union fully supported the recommendations of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which had recently been presented to the Secretary-General. Broadband connectivity and other ICTs had a huge and rapid transformational power in all socio-economic sectors. The European Union was committed to supporting broadband, particularly in Africa, where a comprehensive partnership framework had been established to support development of the ICT sector. A number of flagship European Union projects had been launched and funding for those partnerships had been secured. Moreover, the broadband industry was prepared to increase significantly its current level of investment in ICT deployment, provided that Governments invested in creating an enabling environment for market development and capacity-building.

28. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while there had been heartening progress in ICT connectivity, there was still unequal access between and within countries to the economic and social benefits of the new technology. Furthermore, investment in ICT, which could contribute significantly towards economic growth and poverty reduction, had suffered from the global financial and economic crisis. There was consequently a crucial need for regional and international cooperation and public-private partnerships in order to develop the ICT sector, for the benefit of all communities.

29. ASEAN, for its part, was seeking to enhance intraregional ICT connectivity in order to increase trade, investment, tourism and development in the region and to facilitate the building of a competitive ASEAN community increasingly interlinked with the

wider Asia-Pacific region and the world. The development of physical infrastructure, multimodal transportation and ICT linkages was central to that aim, as was support for legal infrastructure and software. Cooperation was accordingly being sought with other international agencies and development partners, including through the establishment of an ASEAN infrastructure development fund. An ASEAN High-level Task Force had also been set up which, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, was developing a master plan on regional connectivity that was expected to result in the establishment of an ASEAN community by 2015.

30. **Mr. Aryal** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that ICT had the potential to offer new solutions to development challenges, particularly in the context of globalization. However, it was not easily affordable or available in the least developed countries, which were structurally handicapped and vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. The current economic and financial crisis, along with the effects of climate change, had also negatively affected ICT diffusion and investment.

31. While ICT drove globalization, it had increased inequality between developed and developing countries, with the latter being increasingly marginalized in that fast-growing sector. Efforts must therefore be made to reduce the digital divide in the interests of sustainable development. To that end, it was crucial to implement the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, which had stressed the importance of financing ICT as a tool for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

32. The least developing countries, in particular, needed financial support to acquire ICTs and skills and thus to develop e-governance and e-commerce initiatives. The United Nations should play a leading role in that regard, through partnerships with all relevant stakeholders. The application of ICT for development should be a shared global responsibility; a just, inclusive, pro-poor information and communication order should be at the centre of development discourse.

33. **Mr. Mwanyula** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that African countries were currently integrating ICT into their development initiatives, since it was a key to accelerating progress

towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. National and regional programmes being carried out in that regard included a broadband infrastructure initiative within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Remarkable progress had been achieved in Africa in that field, particularly in activities relating to banking, marketing, agriculture, education and health.

34. He called for the support of development partners in sustaining the ICT momentum. The African countries were committed to reaping the gains of such partnerships by promoting the use of ICT at the grass-roots level, in the most efficient and sustainable way, and would continue to promote public-private partnerships in order to strengthen the use of ICT in development efforts. The Group therefore supported the proposed renewal of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum.

35. **Mr. Adler** (Canada), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ), expressed support for the multi-stakeholder model to address the challenges of the Internet and the global information economy on which it increasingly relied. The Internet Governance Forum had demonstrated the value of that approach and had served as a constructive platform for open discussions on Internet governance issues. Moreover, the success of that model had been further reinforced by the emergence of many such forums regionally and nationally since 2005. The CANZ countries accordingly supported renewing the Forum's mandate for a further five years, without substantial change to its format. They recognized, however, that the Forum needed to be improved, particularly in its working methods, and were encouraged by the efforts already undertaken to that end, following the suggestions made at the fourth meeting of the Forum in Sharm El Sheikh. They also welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/2, which called for the establishment of a working group to improve the Forum and looked forward to contributing to its work.

36. **Mr. Zhao** Xinli (China) said that the information society, which had radically changed ways of producing and living, should be people-centred, development-oriented and all-inclusive. It must be recognized, however, that there was a wide gap between developed and developing countries in the ICT field, with the least developed among them

running the risk of information marginalization. The Internet Governance Forum should therefore strengthen the participation of developing countries and give pride of place to development issues. Unfortunately, owing to a lack of regular financial support, it was difficult to guarantee adequate participation by those countries in the Forum: the solution consisted in the inclusion of the Forum's budget in the regular budget of the United Nations within the next five years.

37. His delegation also had concerns about the transparency and representativeness of the Forum's Advisory Group; there still remained room for improvement in the mechanisms of the Forum, which should be supported by a cost-effective bureau and benefit from balanced geographical representation, in accordance with paragraph 78 of the Tunis Agenda.

38. China currently boasted the largest number of Internet users in the world, thanks to its policy of reform and openness, the sustainable development of its economy and advanced global technology and experience. The development of its Internet industry had in turn greatly contributed to the country's all-round development and the well-being of its people. The Chinese Government would continue to promote the development of the Internet, administered in accordance with the law in the light of national conditions, and contribute to its development worldwide.

39. **Mr. Galvani** (Brazil) said that, in order to harness the full potential of ICT for fostering economic growth and contributing to the international development goals, including the MDGs, the United Nations must play the pivotal role assigned to it by the World Summit on the Information Society. Since, moreover, the building of an open, inclusive, diverse and reliable information society required democratic, intergovernmental decision-making, the United Nations should also serve as the forum of choice in that regard.

40. Attention should be directed towards overcoming the digital divide between developed and developing countries through efforts to address the lack of effective financial mechanisms for ICT development. Since the 2005 Tunis session of the World Summit on the Information Society, there had not been enough progress in the development of mechanisms to address shortfalls in official development assistance for that purpose, including the Global Digital Solidarity Fund. He called on Member States, especially donor

countries, to contribute to the Fund. South-South cooperation was also crucial for national capacity-building in that area and should cover, in particular, the development and adoption of open standards for software and hardware and joint projects in ICT research, development and innovation.

41. The World Summit had highlighted the core issue of Internet governance, which should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, fully involve all stakeholders, ensure equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all, ensure stable and secure functioning of the Internet and take multilingualism into account. Brazil recognized the value of the Internet Governance Forum and fully supported the renewal of its mandate, while stressing the need to continue to improve its operation. His country also, in accordance with paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda, supported the enhanced cooperation process, which was a key to enabling Governments, on an equal footing, to discharge their responsibilities on Internet-related international public policy issues.

42. Lastly, he endorsed a suggestion made at an earlier meeting that the Committee should further debate the topic of freedom-of-information laws and their implications, with particular reference to countries possessing such laws.

43. **Mr. Al-Fayez** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia was actively engaged in the progressive liberalization of its ICT sector and the establishment of an information and knowledge society. It had enacted laws and regulations with the aim of increasing cybersecurity and building confidence in electronic transactions. A national policy on science and technology had been adopted in pursuit of Saudi Arabia's long-term goals of developing an information society and a knowledge economy. Measures had furthermore been taken, inter alia: to develop e-Government, e-commerce and e-education; to bridge the digital divide; and to promote research, innovation and access to information for all in Saudi Arabia.

44. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology had been established in 2009 as one of the largest technology education centres in the Middle East. The University shared its discoveries with industry partners, including through the Centre of Excellence in Nano-manufacturing Applications, with the aim of promoting development and meeting the social and economic needs of Saudi Arabia.

45. The establishment of the King Abdullah Institute for Nanotechnology in Riyadh reflected the willingness of Saudi Arabia to invest in new technologies, which were an important resource for the future of any modern economy. In that connection, Saudi Arabia contributed to regional and international efforts to keep pace with the rapid changes in the ICT sector.

46. **Mr. Schneider** (Switzerland) said that the Internet Governance Forum had helped stakeholders to understand each other better and to take more informed decisions. In just five years, the Forum had established several new partnerships and become the major catalyst for Internet-governance capacity-building, particularly in developing countries. The Forum's success was further demonstrated by the fact that it had spawned more than a dozen such forums nationally and regionally throughout the world.

47. Switzerland therefore shared the view that the Forum's mandate should be extended for a further five years, during which time it could continue to evolve as required by its participants. There was no need for fundamental changes to its current format or to its funding mechanism; rather, as had emerged from the recent Sharm El Sheikh consultations, further refinements should be introduced. In that connection, he recalled Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/2, in which the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development had been invited to establish a working group to improve the Forum. Switzerland invited all Member States to participate, along with other stakeholders, in those efforts.

48. The Internet Governance Forum had given attention to the critical issues of Internet resources and development; it now needed to take up the subject of human rights, in the context not only of workshops but also of a main session. The Forum could further enhance the impact it already had on the participation of developing countries in the debate on Internet governance. As had been noted in the aforementioned resolution, the Forum and enhanced cooperation were two distinct but complementary processes. Switzerland fully supported the process towards enhanced cooperation and believed that weakening or halting the Forum process would delay enhanced cooperation and would thus be a step in the wrong direction.

49. **Mr. Lo** (Singapore) said that ICT provided a very positive source of leverage for the development

process by facilitating connectivity, synergy and collaboration in the public and private sectors at the national, regional and international levels. In the private sector, access to good communication platforms and information about supply and demand, opportunities and risks, enhanced prospects for growth and success. In the public sector, ICT allowed various parts of Government to make full use of their potential.

50. ICT was a key enabler to enhance Singapore's economic competitiveness. The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore worked with both public and private organizations to spearhead the strategic use of ICT in such areas as education, health care, manufacturing, logistics, tourism, transport, entertainment and finance. The Development Authority was also cooperating with other public agencies to expand the scope and effectiveness of e-Government services; promoting efforts to make those services available on mobile platforms; and developing initiatives to encourage low-income households, senior citizens and people with disabilities to acquire computers and connect to the Internet.

51. As a longer-term benefit, ICT enhanced the education of future generations. Through it students and teachers had access to unprecedented amounts of information, which could be organized in accordance with their needs. Minds could also be broadened through exposure to a wider variety of ideas and opinions, helping people from different backgrounds to better understand each other.

52. Singapore's third master plan for ICT and education, for the period 2009 to 2014, was designed to enrich and transform the learning environment of students by giving them the tools to succeed in a knowledge economy. Syllabuses, national examinations and classroom experience would focus more closely on twenty-first century skills and the ability to communicate persuasively and collaborate collectively. Students would be required to use ICT to search for information, summarize reports, provide feedback on each other's work and collaborate with peers within and outside of school. Teachers would also learn from each other about effective teaching practices that incorporated ICT use in classrooms. Singapore was making every effort to share what it had learned about the benefits of ICT with other members of the international community.

53. **Mr. Sammis** (United States of America) said that ICT was essential for promoting the growth that developing countries would need to achieve the MDGs. However, in order to reap the full benefits of those technologies, States must protect the environment that made ICT advances possible and societies as a whole must be the stewards of free innovation.

54. The Internet Governance Forum exemplified the realization of that vision: all of the Forum's stakeholders participated on an equal footing in discussions concerning the evolution of the Internet, and the Forum was an essential platform for information-sharing and international dialogue on Internet public policy issues. Those discussions had contributed greatly to national and international public policy and had helped to globalize Internet governance.

55. The Forum, which was clearly realizing the vision set forth by the World Summit on the Information Society, had become a dynamic forum adapted to the needs of participants and its mandate must therefore be renewed. His delegation looked forward to new ways to increase the participation of developing countries in the Forum and hoped that the themes of development and capacity-building would find renewed emphasis in that context in the future.

56. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that his country supported the recommendation to extend the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum until the 2015 review of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes, and noted that there had been overwhelming support for its continuation. The fifth annual meeting of the Forum had recently highlighted the fact that capacity-building, access and affordability had become paramount concerns.

57. Malta was making great strides towards creating an enabling environment for ICT development in all spheres of society so that it could emerge as a regional centre for ICT excellence, including through the development of a number of state-of-the-art ICT programmes. Discussions were also under way on the establishment of an e-skills competence framework.

58. At the international level, his country was taking steps to share its ICT knowledge by supporting local non-governmental organizations dedicated to development and humanitarian assistance. His Government was also helping developing countries through various forms of collaboration, including capacity-building and technology, and was assisting

them in the development of national ICT strategies, the setting-up of telecommunications regulatory frameworks and the development of e-Government services for training and consultancy.

59. He commended the United Nations system for its efforts to mainstream communication for development across the system, its support for e-Government in Member States and its ICT assistance to developing countries aimed at improving global connectivity.

60. **Mr. Adik** (India) said that ICT had truly revolutionized human life and the way in which business was done, making the world a global village in which distances, barriers and boundaries were meaningless. Since the mobile phone, the personal computer and the Internet had become key enabling tools for development, developing countries must be assisted in harnessing the benefits of those technologies in accordance with Goal 8 of the MDGs. For its part, India had been assisting ICT capacity-building efforts in developing countries.

61. Global mobile penetration was now over 60 per cent, with some developing countries having achieved 100 per cent, which demonstrated the extent to which giant strides could be made in technology development. India was one of those success stories thanks to its proactive public policies, which had helped to reduce monopolies, encourage open competition and promote the development of domestic industry. Consequently, mobile telephony costs in India were among the lowest in the world and India was being used as a model for other developing countries to follow.

62. While the opportunities created by cyberspace were limitless and the benefits of the Internet to development worldwide immense, cyber attacks posed a grave threat to the security of ICT systems. The international community must therefore work together closely to confront the transnational nature of such threats. Furthermore, in view of the large disparities in Internet affordability and connectivity, greater efforts were also required to bridge the digital divide.

63. Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/65/64-E/2010/12, his delegation called on the international community to provide greater financial and technical support for the full implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels.

64. ICT had made a major contribution to economic growth in India and, despite the global recession, it remained one of the fastest growing sectors of the Indian economy. Indeed, ICT was being used to implement an ambitious national e-Governance plan involving the creation of physical infrastructure, the setting-up of appropriate institutional mechanisms, the development of policies and standards, and the adoption of the necessary legal framework.

65. **Mr. Lakhal** (Tunisia) noted that the importance of ICT in the development process had been reiterated at the recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs, whose outcome document (A/65/L.1) contained clear commitments, inter alia: to promote the provision and use of ICT, including through facilitating affordable access to such technologies by developing countries; to upgrade the quality and quantity of existing telecommunication infrastructure; to support more modern ICT applications; and to increase connectivity, access and investment in innovation and development. The Committee should review the progress achieved in those areas on an annual basis.

66. Despite the welcome progress made towards achieving universal access to ICTs, many development challenges remained and new ones were emerging in the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis. While the mobile revolution had helped to narrow one aspect of the digital divide, mobile telephony alone could not address all ICT and development challenges. In particular, broadband access and programme content required special attention, given the importance of the Internet to the modern world economy and the critical need for broadband services to advance many socio-economic objectives. An extra effort was also required to bring marginalized and disadvantaged groups into the information society through training and the creation of locally relevant content in appropriate languages.

67. Tunisia supported the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum and stressed the importance of supporting the effective participation of developing countries in that process by addressing their budgetary and capacity-building concerns.

68. To enhance the visibility of its ICT, Tunisia had launched important national, regional and international initiatives which included the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in

Tunis in November 2005, and the "ICT for All" forum hosted annually by Tunisia since 2006, which provided a valuable opportunity for different stakeholders to exchange information and to contribute towards the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and the Millennium Declaration.

69. **Mr. Tag-Eldin** (Egypt) said that ICT tools were essential for achieving the MDGs. Although significant progress had been made in many parts of the world, including Africa, with respect to mobile telephony and access to ICT, additional efforts were needed to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, with respect to Internet access and broadband connectivity. That was especially true in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis.

70. The current mandate of the Internet Governance Forum should be extended for a further five years and the Forum should remain a multi-stakeholder platform. The Forum was an important framework for the discussion of Internet-related policy issues and the exchange of information, experience and best practices. The Egyptian Government had demonstrated its commitment to promoting dialogue on issues related to Internet governance by hosting the fourth annual conference of Forum stakeholders in 2009.

71. His delegation looked forward to the report of the working group to be established by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to consider improvements to the Forum, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/2, and underscored the importance of ensuring that the working group was established in an open and inclusive manner. The working group's efforts would help improve the procedural and organizational aspects of the Forum, including those related to enhancing the capacity of its secretariat and addressing shortcomings in the work of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the mechanism of open consultations. The working group's deliberations would also provide useful input on substantive issues, including the need for the agenda and discussions of the Forum to place more emphasis on development and on critical Internet resources. The working group should also recommend ways to enhance the participation of stakeholders from developing countries in all Forum activities.

72. Efforts to strengthen cooperation on ICT had been stalled for the past five years, for no apparent reason. His delegation hoped that the open and inclusive consultations to be launched by the Secretary-General in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/2 would advance the process towards enhanced cooperation in order to enable Governments on an equal footing to carry out their roles and responsibilities in respect of international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet.

73. In conclusion, he emphasized that Egypt had also demonstrated its commitment to the broader World Summit process through its ongoing collaboration with its regional and international partners to develop the international agenda for the ICT sector, including by recommending priorities and actions. His country had hosted the first and second sessions of the Pan-Arab Regional Conference on the World Summit on the Information Society and the African Union Ministerial Conference on Communications and Information and Technology. The latter Conference had considered the implementation of the African Regional Plan on the Knowledge Economy, which aimed at building a region fully benefiting from ICT services by the year 2015. At the national level, Egypt was developing appropriate infrastructure, programmes and policies, and telecommunications services had become one of the main drivers of socio-economic development.

74. **Mr. Igenbayev** (Kazakhstan) called upon the developed countries to fulfil their commitments to increase financial and technical assistance and promote exchanges and cooperation in order to help States harness the capabilities of ICT for the achievement of the MDGs. In addition, the international community must address the digital divide between developed and developing countries.

75. Effective ICT partnerships between all relevant stakeholders were instrumental in promoting information and knowledge for development. At the same time, countries should formulate national ICT policies tailored to their particular circumstances. ICT infrastructure and human capital endowment were also important.

76. Access to and effective utilization of ICT were important for Kazakhstan's socio-economic development. His Government encouraged a climate conducive to investment and a legal, political and regulatory

framework in which economic growth and development could flourish.

77. The United Nations should play a major role in helping developing countries improve their capacity to take advantage of ICT and integrate themselves into the global knowledge-based economy. Accordingly, the Internet Governance Forum's multilateral, democratic and transparent character was unique and valuable and should be preserved. His delegation fully supported the extension of the mandate of the Forum for another five years and agreed that improvements to the format, functions and operations of the Forum should be considered at its sixth meeting, in 2011.

78. Sustainable development on a global scale required the accelerated transfer of knowledge and technology, especially ICT, to developing countries from developed countries. The substantial progress Kazakhstan had achieved in the area of e-Government confirmed the importance of acquiring advanced ICT capabilities along with advanced industrial technologies and well-trained human resources. The Government had mandated every State agency to establish a web presence and Internet users were able to access various public services online. The Government intended to continue promoting the use of ICT tools for social activities, increasing transparency and accountability and building human capacities.

79. Underscoring the importance of a good basic education and the knowledge and skills required in the information society, he said that by 2009 most schools and universities in Kazakhstan had been equipped with the latest generation of computers and good access to the Internet.

80. His delegation called upon all stakeholders to be more creative, innovative and cooperative in order to build a knowledge society that was harmonious, prosperous, secure and beneficial to all.

81. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) said that the challenges of employing ICT to create a knowledge-based economy in developing countries required enormous financial and human resources, long-term commitments, cooperation among stakeholders and, above all, public acceptance. Uganda had made considerable progress in support of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional level. For example, it was now connected through a national backbone to

the South Africa-East Africa-Fiber Optic Cable (SEACOM), launched in July 2009.

82. However, his country faced challenges at the national level that were common to developing countries, including low information technology (IT) literacy levels; poor and unequal access to ICT facilities; initially high costs for access to the Internet, ICT equipment and electricity; cultural attitudes and low income levels.

83. The mandate of the Internet Governance Forum should be renewed, since it was the appropriate platform for an urgently needed discussion of regulatory safeguards to ensure the security and stability of the Internet. The Forum should also address other issues, including the protection of personal data and privacy, access and diversity, the challenge of cybercrime and countering use of the Internet for terrorism. Although a serious and sincere effort had been made to adhere to World Summit principles in the area of Internet governance, considerably more work was needed to achieve a consensus on the topic.

84. For Africa, the greater priority was still to increase basic access to ICT and to strengthen Internet governance on the continent. The Forum had no direct decision-making authority and was not equipped to provide the solutions Africa was seeking. There was a need for more serious engagement of the developing countries, including those in Africa, in Forum activities. The Forum's secretariat should find ways to motivate the Governments of those countries to become more involved in its work.

85. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that it was necessary to explore new ways to bridge the digital divide and to utilize ICT as a catalyst for global development. The Internet Governance Forum was a viable platform for enhancing cooperation on ICT issues. His delegation fully supported the Forum's open multi-stakeholder framework and endorsed the extension of its mandate for a further five years. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society provided a sound basis for intergovernmental discussions of the Internet, and the outcome of the fifth meeting of the Forum in Vilnius in September 2010 had further consolidated international cooperation in that regard. Although his Government welcomed the inclusion of Internet governance for development as a new theme for a main session of the Forum, it stressed the need to

link the Forum to regional Internet governance initiatives.

86. Sri Lanka's ICT policies incorporated a multi-stakeholder approach. The Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka formulated and implemented ICT strategies and programmes in both the public and private sectors. The Agency's "e-Sri Lanka Development Project", the national IT action plan, was a public-private partnership that focused on building the relevant infrastructure, establishing an enabling environment, developing IT human resources, modernizing Government and citizen services, leveraging ICT for economic and social development and promoting Sri Lanka as an ICT and knowledge hub in South Asia.

87. Considerable progress had been made in those areas: computer literacy had increased from 5 per cent in 2005 to nearly 30 per cent to date, and the President's "Mahinda Chintana" policy document pledged to increase that figure to 50 per cent within the next five years. His Government was also addressing the digital divide within the country by establishing rural ICT centres among other educational projects.

88. Using ICT for education had proved affordable. Considerable savings on textbook costs were achieved by guiding students to online resources. With World Bank assistance, a public-private partnership project had been launched to build a high-speed fibre-optic backbone network to enhance Internet access. The Government aimed to provide access to all households within the next three years at competitive rates.

89. His delegation supported the proposals in document A/65/276 that an advocacy strategy for communication for development should be developed for the United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development and that a common learning and knowledge framework on communication for development should be established. The United Nations system's approach to ICT must complement national efforts.

90. **Mr. Abdulaal** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain's national strategies focused on using ICT for economic, social and cultural development and developing technologies for use in sectors including production, medicine, health and construction. Bahrain attached considerable importance to environmentally friendly technologies, as they held the key to sustainable development.

91. In the *United Nations E-Government Survey 2010*, Bahrain was ranked thirteenth out of 192 countries measured according to the e-Government development index. That was a considerable achievement, considering that the Bahrain e-Government Authority had only been established in 2007. Bahrain had been nominated to host a regional e-centre to assist with the achievement of the MDGs and, in the light of its success in developing statistical and data-collection systems, it had conducted its first ever population census in 2010.

92. Turning to the subjects of education and health care, he said that Bahrain had launched a "Schools of the Future" project, which was designed to use state-of-the-art technology in education, while the Ministry of Health used IT for health prevention programmes, the delivery of primary care services and the development of health facility networks and public health facilities.

93. Bahrain stood ready to share the fruits of its success in developing e-Government systems with all interested parties, and looked forward to providing training and consultancy services, through the Bahrain e-Government Authority, to assist countries in meeting their needs and achieving the MDGs.

94. **Mr. Hannan** (Bangladesh) underscored the urgency of enabling developing countries to participate in the global economy and bridging the digital divide between them and developed countries. World harmony, peace, stability and prosperity depended on ensuring that developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, did not lag far behind the rest of the world.

95. The outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis sessions of the World Summit on the Information Society should be implemented without delay in order to bridge the digital divide and put ICT to work addressing the development divide in the South. His delegation looked forward to the report of the working group to be established by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to improve the activities of the Internet Governance Forum. It agreed that the working group's mandate should be extended for a further five years. However, it stressed that the group should be established in an open and geographically balanced manner, with special consideration given to representation of the least developed countries.

96. His Government had identified universal access to ICT as one of the key means for achieving its development policy objectives and poverty alleviation strategies. With approximately 60 million mobile telephone subscribers and a telecommunications network coverage of nearly 99 per cent, Bangladesh was poised to advance to the next stage of ICT growth. The Government had already laid some 15,000 kilometres of fibre-optic lines to facilitate nationwide connectivity and was developing the backbone infrastructure to promote broadband connectivity. It was also considering the establishment of a universal access fund to subsidize connectivity on an equitable basis, especially for rural populations.

97. Indeed, the widening broadband divide within countries and across geographic regions was a major obstacle to achieving an inclusive global information society. Affordable technology transfers, including low-cost broadband connections and capacity-building, were required in order to enable developing countries, especially the least developed among them, to benefit from ICT.

98. **Ms. Silveira** (Uruguay) said that universal access to ICT tools was essential for development and social inclusion. Furthermore, educational programmes and strategies must provide innovative solutions in order to meet the demand for labour with specific technological skills.

99. Since 2007, her Government had been implementing the pioneering CEIBAL Plan, financed by the State, under which every public primary school student and teacher would be given one laptop and public primary schoolteachers would receive training. The aim was to make wireless Internet access available to all, at school, in public places and at home, and to narrow the digital divide. Thanks to the programme, thus far 96 per cent of Uruguay's students had Internet access and 371,000 laptops had been distributed. As a result, teaching and learning were undergoing profound changes, creating equal opportunities for access to the information and knowledge that were essential for a more inclusive and less asymmetrical society.

100. Uruguay's experience was worth replicating in other developing countries facing similar challenges. Her delegation urged the international community, particularly the United Nations, to harness international cooperation in order to promote ICT access for the least privileged countries and sectors of society.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.