



Intervention by H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka at the first preparatory meeting of the General Assembly's overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)- 01st July 2015

Distinguished Co-facilitators,

Let me at the outset thank you for convening this preparatory meeting.

We align ourselves with the intervention made by the distinguished representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As we are about to formulate the global development agenda for the next fifteen years, the discussion on the role of ICTs as a key enabler of sustainable development has come to the forefront. Information and Communications Technology is a significant catalyst for economic and social development in the contemporary world, with critical spin offs for employment generation and wealth creation. Access for all to the Internet can enable incredible societal and economic gains.

It is, therefore, opportune that the United Nations General Assembly has launched a ten-year review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, this year.

Distinguished Co-facilitators,

There have been many a substantial achievement since the 2003 and 2005 World Summits on the Information Society. To name a few: Internet penetration has grown from about 15% of the global population in 2005 to over 40% today.

Broadband internet is becoming more affordable around the world – over the past five years, fixed broadband prices as a share of GNI per capita have dropped by 65%. In developing markets, the digital economy is growing at 15-25% per year. This bodes well for a more connected future.

These achievements also speak to the core of the Tunis Agenda drafted ten years ago, which represented a global commitment to bridging the digital divide, and to a model of internet governance that is open, inclusive, and transparent, so that it can be a practical enabler of development.

I can cite my own country, Sri Lanka, as a prime example of these achievements. Due to the implementation of a carefully calibrated people-centered national policy, Sri Lanka's IT literacy has grown steadily from a mere 3 percent in 2005 to almost 50 percent in 2014. We must not forget that disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups could be highly benefited by appropriate ICT applications.

We have in large part implemented the WSIS outcomes. As noted at the WSIS Forum few weeks ago, we have jumped 11 places in the World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index, 65th in the world and leading in South Asia. Sri Lanka ranks in the top ten economies in terms of affordability.

As a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, we have also taken a lead initiative in Multi-lingual Internet initiatives keeping with the policy of encouraging multilingualism, putting in place technical conditions to facilitate local languages on the Internet and becoming the first in Asia to obtain multiple IDN scripts for its Country Code Domain.

The legal framework for e-Governance and e-Commerce is in place in Sri Lanka. Several years ago we have adopted the requisite legislation for electronic commercial transactions, based on UNCITRAL model laws.

In addition, we have seen the need for investment in combating criminal activities on the Internet, which is why Sri Lanka is strongly committed to responding positively to the invitation to join the Budapest Cyber Crime Convention of the Council of Europe.

Distinguishes Co-facilitators,

Yet, outstanding challenges certainly remain in advancing the development of the global Information Society.

Despite the positive trends in ICT connectivity and affordability, there is a continuing digital divide and a gap in broadband access between developed and developing countries. One of the main challenges for developing countries is to mobilize resources for investment in ICT diffusion.

Though the global community has been successful in rapidly deploying broadband – to 2 billion more people over the last 10 years, there are billions more to reach, and continued investment in this sector is critical.

Increasing affordable and universal ICTs access for all, increasing multilingualism, accessibility and cultural diversity, and enhancing capacity building and meaningful participation in global policy development remain some of the key challenges ahead.

Distinguished Co-facilitators,

Clearly, WSIS has been an indispensable forum to engage with diverse stakeholders in order to promote ICTs as well as to help shape Internet governance in an open, inclusive way which enables development. We are at an opportune moment to

share information and perspectives – to identify common goals and challenges that will inform our deliberations in the run-up to the High-level meeting in December.

WSIS+10 High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly will have to review our progress so far, and recommend global policy options taking into account the key challenges in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. It will have to provide guidance as to how to overcome these challenges.

In this regard, we wish to state that the outcome document of the High-level meeting can take the form of a declaration agreed at the highest political level; a declaration that stipulates clear policy guidelines.

My delegation wishes to assure you, the Co-facilitators, of our fullest cooperation, towards achieving the goals of this Preparatory Process.

I thank you.