Mr Erkki Liikanen

Member of the European Commission, responsible for Enterprise and the Information Society

"Statement at the World Summit on Information Society"

First Plenary Session World Summit on Information Society

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate all of us present here in Geneva at this very first World Summit on Information Society on the successful and balanced outcome of the process. I would in particular like to thank the Swiss government for its contribution.

We see the Information Society as a global society. A society in which we have the opportunity to communicate better with each other. A society allowing us to learn more about each other and from each other's experiences.

The term "Information Society" was adopted by the European Union at an early stage. It is a concept that we have come to appreciate, that we value and that has become a basis for our lives.

The Political Declaration agreed at this Summit constitutes a common vision for the development of a global Information Society. It will be based on:

- The respect for our common fundamental values, such as Human rights, freedom of access to information and the empowerment that the Internet gives to disadvantaged groups;
- The respect for diversity at all levels - linguistic and cultural. This diversity is an expression of the differences between peoples and societies all over the world;
- A pro-competitive legal and regulatory framework. This can mobilise investment and foster growth and development, based on market forces; and
- Policies taking into account the need for solidarity and social cohesion.

As a partner, we are already discussing this with many of you in our bilateral and multilateral engagements. As a major donor, we are increasing our commitments in accordance with our partners' priorities.

And as a participant in the World Summit on Information Society, the European Union has given ample proof of its commitment to this Summit during the preparatory process.

The Information Society concerns all citizens and not only a fifth of the world's population. This constitutes two major challenges for the coming fifteen years.
Firstly, how do we mobilise information technology to contribute to achieving the goals of the Millennium Development Goals and to bridging the Digital Divide? Here, I believe that efforts focused on e-Learning, e-Health and e-Government can make a real difference for citizens.

Secondly, how do we enable many more citizens of the world to participate in the Information Society? This means creating the conditions for affordable access and services.

Furthermore, this opens new perspectives for private public partnerships to develop new technological solutions and new models for encouraging the take up of those solutions.

Today we have to start transforming the principles agreed at this Summit into a Plan of Action. This concerns a wide range of topics such as Access to information and knowledge, Capacity building, Information technology applications, Enabling environment, eCommerce, Security and so forth. Here civil society and the private sector play a pivotal role. The Summit rightly recognises the principle of Digital solidarity. We have agreed on an agenda, which fully mobilises the potential for future co-operation.

I consider the Plan of Action endorsed at this Summit as a point of departure. It could give renewed impetus to the development of a truly global Information Society for all. It is an invitation for stronger co-operation and new partnerships. It shows the value of international and multilateral mechanisms.

This Summit will give new incentives to citizens world-wide. It will contribute to economic growth. It is a new adventure. It marks the development of a new frontier very different from frontiers in the territorial sense. It is a Cyberspace – a space without limits, except those of our creativity and imagination.

Thank you for your attention.