

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND DEVELOPMENT



This publication "Compendium of Speeches on Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Development" by H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic and the Honorable Dr. Margarita Cedeno de Fernandez, First Lady of the Dominican Republic has been compiled and assembled with the assistance of the following institutions of the Government of the Dominican Republic.

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COMPENDIUM OF SPEECHES ON INFORMATION
& COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND DEVELOPMENT



H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez
President of the Dominican Republic

Honorable Dr. Margarita Cedeño
de Fernandez, First Lady of the
Dominican Republic



Inaugural Meeting of the United Nations Global Alliance for Information
and Communication Technologies and Development

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for Information and Communication Technologies and Development

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*Presidency of the
Dominican Republic*



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Message to the Inaugural Meeting of the U.N. Global Alliance for ICTs and Development

It gives me great pleasure to know, after the progress made at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as well as the 5-year review of the Millennium Summit, the launching of the U.N. Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Development will take place in the vibrantly modern and global city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

I offer my sincerest congratulations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the gracious hosting Government for having taken the world one-step forward toward making ICTs a mechanism for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the broader development agenda.

Since my previous Administration in the late 1990s, I have made ICTs a priority for advancing the Dominican Republic toward a more modern and progressive knowl-



President Leonel Fernandez.

edge-based economy. We have made great strides with the establishment of the first Science and Technology Cyberpark, computer laboratories in many of the most remote schools and classrooms, Presidential Office on E-Government and ICTs, digital cities project, and a countless

number of Community Technology Centers (CTCs) in the most rural and impoverished communities, all of which are most in need of connecting themselves to the global information and knowledge society.

I am most pleased to share that the recent creation of a National Commission on the Information and Knowledge Society in the Dominican Republic will help us to promote an enabling environment where important stakeholders join efforts toward ensuring that the power of markets unite with government and the greater community in order to ensure that the Dominican Republic achieves the MDGs and more sustainable and human development. Both our National Commission and the Global Alliance enshrine the principles adopted at the WSIS of developing multi-stakeholder processes at all levels for promoting policy-dialogue and partnerships that bridge the digital divide and content gap and harness ICTs for enhancing the achievement of the MDGs.

The celebration of the 36th General Assembly of the Organization of American

States (OAS), which was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, just two weeks ago, emphasized the role of ICTs for development and placed this very issue on the agenda of this important organization. I believe we are at an important cross-roads. Latin America and the Caribbean as well as other regions have come quite far in fostering ICTs as a means of achieving our development goals.

On this important occasion, we are honored to present you with this "Compendium of Speeches on Information & Communication Technology (ICT) and Development", assembled by my Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals, the Office of the First Lady, and the National Commission on the Information and Knowledge Society, which encompasses the vision that my wife and I have had for integrating ICTs into the Dominican Republic's national development strategy.

Leonel Fernandez
President of the Dominican Republic

H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic

Keynote Address, Opening Ceremony of the 36th Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States - OAS

(Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) 4 June 2006

Honorable Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation;
Honorable Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Dr. José Miguel Insulza;
Honorable President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Dr. Luis Alberto Moreno;
Honorable Assistant Secretary-General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert Ramdin;
Ladies and Gentlemen Representatives of Permanent Observer Countries;
Representatives of International Organizations;
Special Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great honor and satisfaction that we are able to hold this 36th Session of the



President Leonel Fernandez, 36th OAS General Assembly.

General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Dominican Republic; and for that reason, on behalf of the Government and the Dominican people, we feel profoundly delighted in giving you a fra-

ternal welcome, hoping your stay proves to be beneficial, fruitful, and enjoyable.

This regional meeting has a unique topic. For the first time in the history of annual regular sessions, the General Assembly of the OAS has adopted such a crucial topic as governance and development in the knowledge society.

During the Cold War, in many parts of the world, it was considered revolutionary, to be at the forefront, to be part of the changing process of humanity, to be associated with being member of the “PC”, that being, the (Partido Comunista) Communist Party.

After the end of the Cold War, to be progressive and up to date regarding the transformation by which humanity has gone has required owning a “PC”, that is, a personal computer.

This points out that in recent years; mankind has suffered a new and profound change. It has become part of the knowl-

edge revolution. This knowledge revolution has been possible because of the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which have radically transformed the way humanity lives, works, learns, communicates, and entertains.

There is no doubt that entering into the 21st century, we have moved from the industrial era to the information and knowledge era. It implies a new paradigm of productive, commercial, social, cultural, and technological development.

For the nations of the Latin American and Caribbean region, the greatest challenges consist in harnessing this new paradigm and eradicate once and for all poverty, inequality, and social injustice, while being able to guarantee in the future, modern forms of civilization, sustainable development, and democratic governance.

By means of the enhanced use of ICTs, we will advance faster toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United

Nations with a deadline of 2015; towards the protection of the environment and natural resources, toward improved of the quality of education, towards perfected industrial production processes; towards increased production and productivity in the agricultural sector; towards the development of medium and small micro enterprises; towards the promotion of telemedicine, long distance education, e-commerce, and e-government, and e-health solutions.

We recognize that there are many skeptical people regarding the advantages and benefits that a knowledge society offers.

Generally, these people depart from the idea that a knowledge society is a luxury only available to developed nations. They consider the knowledge society to be equivalent to a post-industrial society, and that as part of the structural problems that we have accumulated in the hemisphere, are due to the fact that we have not been able to fully accomplish the tasks of an industrial society, which is what coins us as

developing countries -an illusion and fantasy- trying to compete with those that impose their hegemony in every aspect over the rest of the world.

Of course, we do not share this rationale. On the contrary, we consider that the knowledge society offers us, for the first time in human history, the tools to effectively confront all the economic, social, political, cultural, and technological burdens, which have painted our history.

This is a crucial time for the nations of the Latin America and Caribbean region to take ownership of our history, of our traditions and culture, and to become architects of our own destiny.

The knowledge revolution will provide our countries with a great partner in the search for new initiatives and plans that will free us from misery, dependence, and hopelessness to develop.

Because the knowledge society only has value, meaning, and importance if it serves

to promote sustainable development, to improve the competitiveness of our nations, to create job opportunities and, to improve humanly dignified conditions.

We are aware that support for advancing a knowledge society presents us with new challenges and constraints and new battle fronts.

We cannot ignore that this new horizon of perspectives opening before us is also full of inequalities, that the world has a new form of a social divide, those that are the info-rich and the info-poor. This new reality is produced within societies and in its relations with entities abroad.

We know that the knowledge revolution is not comparable to the French Revolution; according to Shashi Tharoor, current U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Communications.

The French Revolution developed under the cry for freedom, brotherhood, and equality. In the Knowledge Revolution there

is freedom, a little bit of brotherhood, and no equality. This last point is what creates the digital divide.

The governments of Latin America and the Caribbean are confronted with the obligation of creating national strategies that include communities that will reap the benefits of the digital revolution. That way, further social widening of the divide will be avoided, and alternatively, it will contribute to fostering development.

Currently, with respect to the digital and knowledge society, the world is very unequal, and that is morally, socially, economically, and politically unacceptable. It is unacceptable that in Luxembourg 400,000 citizens have access to the Internet, more than all of the 700 million inhabitants of Africa. It is unacceptable that, only in the island of Manhattan, there is more access to the Internet than in all of Latin America together.

That is a new scenario that we have to fight to change, because if we do not do so, the present social divides between



President Leonel Fernandez and OAS Secretary-General J. Miguel Insulza.

nations will multiply in an unprecedented manner, representing the most serious threat to peace and security, ever known in human history.

In addition to the social, gender, commercial and capital flow gap that currently exists on the planet, there is a high speed optical fiber and digital connection divide which broadens the gap between North and South, which underlies, in the present state of our civilization, the challenge over-

all between progress and poverty or well-being and misery.

For these reasons, this session of the OAS General Assembly presents us with a momentous occasion focusing on governance, development, and the knowledge society.

The draft declaration of this meeting highlights “the importance that information communication technologies (ICTs) play as

a cross-sectoral tool for achieving equitable and sustainable development and strengthening governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as, the need to strive toward all citizens in The Americas, particularly those individuals in situations of vulnerability or with special needs, participate in reaping the of the benefits generated by the knowledge society”.

The draft declaration of the OAS is inspired by the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva and Tunisia,

the Declaration of Florianopolis in 2000, the Declaration of Rio de Janeiro on ICTs for Development in 2001; the Agenda of Connectivity for the Americas in 2002, and Bávaro Declaration of 2003.

In the Dominican Republic we have made enormous efforts, since our last administration, in promoting a national strategy for the knowledge society. We have tried to expand connectivity throughout the country, promoting easy access to ICTs for citizens at all levels, without distinction of race, age, sex, or social condition.



Opening Ceremony, 36th OAS General Assembly Dominican Republic.

We have installed computer laboratories in public schools. We built a Science and Technology park known as the Cybernetic Park of Santo Domingo. We created the Technological Institute of the Americas. We are working to develop E-government and we are making progress in the construction of 135 Community Technology Centers (CTC).

We encouraged the private sector to integrate more actively and dynamically in this field and we have adopted a legal and regulatory framework that includes Intellectual Property Law, General Law of Telecommunications, E-Commerce Regulation, and Digital Company Law as well as creation of the National Commission on Information and Knowledge Society.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I do not try to take advantage of your indulgence. I have only meant to share with you the great enthusiasm that we feel for the privilege of being part of a time, although full of great intentions, also full of enormous and radical transformations. It is a time of true revolutionary potential, perhaps, more than any other moment in history.

At least, that is the feeling generated by this slogan: knowledge is power.

Let us take advantage of this enormous opportunity and spread throughout our peoples the seeds of peace, love, and brotherhood.

Thank you very much.

H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernández, President of the Dominican Republic

Keynote Speech on Information and Communication Technology for Development & National Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals, Global Roundtable Forum on Innovation and Investment: Scaling Science and Technology to Meet the Millennium Development Goals, Sponsored by the U.N. Millennium Project, U.N. ICT Task Force, and U.N. Fund for International Partnerships

(U.N. World Summit, U.N. Headquarters) 13 September 2005

Thank you Mr. Chairman. First of all I would like to thank Jose Antonio Ocampo, good friend for many years, for inviting me to participate in his roundtable about innovation and Information and Communication Technologies for development. I would like to start perhaps by presenting a summary of the debate we've had in the Dominican Republic and the conceptual framework that the government has taken into consideration for

designing and implementing a national strategy for economic and social development related to Information and Communication Technologies.

When we started discussing nationally the possibility of integrating Information and Communication Technologies into a national strategy for development in the Dominican Republic, initially there was a resistance, people wouldn't accept the idea

that a small developing country could have Information and Communication Technologies as a priority in its national agenda. And this created some sort of debate nationwide. The idea that Information and Communication Technologies are a luxury of rich countries and that we should be more focused and more concerned about unfulfilled promises of the past related I would say to a pre-industrial society, why not dedicate efforts and resources more to resolve the ongoing problems of electric power for example, or solve the problems of water supply, or sanitation, or road infrastructure, instead of going up and considering the idea of Information and Communication Technologies.

Afterwards if Information and Communication Technologies were considered for a post industrial society how can we adapt this to an emerging developing economy. So this was the environment within which we started operating in the Dominican Republic. Our idea has always been that technology, innovation; science brings a new opportunity for countries to leap frog



Queen Noor of Jordan and President Leonel Fernandez, Heads of State Round-table, 2005 U.N. World Summit.

stages of development. And for the first time, I would say in human history, we have the resources, the instruments in order to reduce poverty, in order to accelerate a human progress and prosperity.

So it was with this idea in mind that we start designing our national strategy for development incorporating the tools of Information and Communication Technologies, make it part of a national will in order to eradicate poverty, in order to create

opportunities, especially for the younger generations to move on within modernization, within contemporary civilization, I would say.

In a way also of integrating to the rest of the world by sharing information, by sharing knowledge, by networking worldwide, bring new fresh ideas back home that would become more innovative and would have a national impulse for growth, for development and for the transformation of our national society.

So we begin what we call a double agenda or complementary agendas for national development is, not forgetting, not leaving aside all the challenges that have not been fulfilled from the past. Yes, we have to make our infrastructure development work in an appropriate way, yes we have to consider electric power and water supply and housing and roads, and dams and all of these aspects that we have accumulated historically and been unable to solve over the years, but at the same have this new modern agenda that would incorporate

Information and Communication Technologies. So bring everything together, the unfulfilled achievements of the past and the new challenges of the future coming together in one national agenda.

So having that in mind, we began first through the school system, public school system. The idea was to democratize and massively use these new technologies, what better way than through public schools after all there was already a social gap being created because children coming from middle and high income families that would go to private schools already had access to Information and Communication Technologies. While children and students coming from low income families were deprived of the access to Information and Communication Technologies. So without even considering it, without even thinking about it, we were creating conditions for a widening of the social gap within the country between the rich and the poor. So the idea was how can we establish in the public school system the conditions that would enable these kids from low income families



Heads of State Roundtable, 2006 U.N. World Summit.

to have access to these Information and Communication Technologies.

And so it was that with my very good friend here Jose Maria Figures, a former president of Costa Rica that visited me in the Dominican Republic back in 1997-1998 I supposed, and came up with a programme that he was working with at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT, a programme called “little intelligent com-

munities”. And then we began a project pilot in 8 provinces in the Dominican Republic to install these new devices of “little intelligent communities”. The first reaction was that people felt identified with what the government was trying to do and then we installed computer labs in every public high school in the Dominican Republic. We had 20 computers for each public high school that would be a computer lab within the school; and then children would share that during the

week according to the educational schedule of every school.

And then we moved into junior high school, and now during this administration we are also expanding the programmes into primary school and kinder and preprimary school. So we are having a programme in the Dominican Republic from K to 12 where all students of all levels can have access to Information and Communication Technologies. But considering the community that is out of school especially adults who drop out of school, junior high school or beginning high school levels, we have created through the First Lady's Office what we call Technological Community Centers, that would allow the community members to also have access to Information and Communication Technologies.

Having these large broad base of students and the communities to access the Information and Communication Technologies then now we are working in partnership with the business sector in the Dominican Republic, especially with medium and small

size companies, within a special programme that we call Promipyme in the Dominican Republic which is a promotion for small and medium size companies to enhance the use of Information and Communication Technologies to increase productivity and increase the improving of the quality of services that are offered by medium and small size companies. And this has had a great impact of improving production and productivity and the quality of their efforts to the benefit of the Dominican society.

We have been moving into the health care sector; electronic record keeping at the public hospitals. This is a mayor break through in Dominican health care system. We are doing it at the same time that developed countries are trying to implement electronic health care keeping of the patients worldwide. Our great hope, illusion our great dream of the future is making a transformation of the nature of the Dominican economy from a labor intensive model into a more capital intensive knowledge based economy. We built a Santo Domingo Cyber-park which is a scientific-

technological park with the intention of at the same time having an academic institution and at the same time business oriented scientific and technological park.

We have promoted investments worldwide, and we have been lucky enough even in bad conditions in the world economy to receive investments in the Dominican Republic from world known companies and also on the academic side we began with a programme to train the workforce that would be employed in the different enterprises established at the Santo Domingo Cyber Park. We got the approval of companies like Microsoft that would certify the training programme for the youngsters in the Dominican Republic that would later incorporate into the market labor force at the Santo Domingo Cyber-Park.

Then we've moved to a higher stage and that is bringing a US standard college, in this case the Stevens Institute of Technology to come to the Dominican Republic for masters and PhD programmes so we can train software engineers and biotechnology, in simulations

technology and all these new technologies and innovative products that can contribute to this challenge of modifying, of changing the Dominican economy from a traditionally agricultural export economy into a services economy, but more focus on exporting services coming out of the Information and Communication Technologies industry.

So we are trying to make the Dominican Republic a technological hub of our sub-region, the Caribbean, and by that we can gain many things, first of all connecting to the rest of the world, I think if there is one lesson to be learned from any country that has made a significant progress is that the only way a nation can really move forward is by integrating into the world economy. If a nation isolates itself there is no possible way that it can really prosper and can really progress, so the first connecting internationally being part of the global system and that can be achieved primarily through the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

Education is key, without education there is no way a country can make a transition into

Information and Communication Technologies industry. So the formation of human capital is a priority in our national agenda. And that is the reason why we attracted the presence of higher learning institutions into the Dominican Republic, but at the same time the government has a special budget to finance scholarships for Dominicans to go abroad, this year 2000 young Dominican will be going to Europe, to the United States and Asia for masters and PhD programmes that have been covered by a special scholarship funded by the Dominican government.

We are establishing partnerships at different parts of the world especially here in New York which is a place especially for Dominicans, we have nearly 1 million Dominicans leaving here in New York and many of them, around 40,000 Dominican students at CUNY.

And then we have established partnership with these different colleges and institutions of higher learning in the Dominican

Republic, so we have our own Dominicans, second born generations here in the US that will go back, that are bilingual, bicultural and eager to help the Dominican Republic move forward. So we use these human resources and connect also with US corporations and with potential US investors to have permanent linkage between the Dominican Republic and the US in fostering and enhancing these type of relationships.

In our experience we can say that the Dominican Republic can guarantee some sort of sustained economic growth that can be the precondition for sustainable development in the Dominican Republic by integrating Information and Communication Technologies as a part of our national strategy for economic and social development. This has been our experience. During this administration we are emphasizing that, focusing on that and hopefully we can become a success story for the rest of the world.

Thank you very much.

H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic

**Keynote Speech, ICT as an Enabler for Growth,
Development and Competitiveness: Implications
for National and International policies and
actions | Partnership for Development:
Information and Knowledge for Development**

UNCTAD XI (Sao Paulo, Brazil) 16 June 2004

I thank you very much.
Secretary-General of the UNCTAD,
Rubens Ricupero
Distinguish members of the honor table.
Ladies and gentlemen.

Well, in the wonderful presentation that we've just heard from Mr. Soriñez Moreno, there are many of the ideas that I wanted to present here. As so, I'm going to save some time and raise a few ideas for work, which I think is relevant to this theme of ICT. But I would like to thank you for the eloquence and the clarity of the presentation that you've just given. Mr. President, I would say that the problem before us in

working with the theme of the Information Society and trade and development is that this new development paradigm which is represented by the Information Society is applied equally to developed and developing countries. I think this is the main central theme because there are many academics; there are many people who are linked to this area who have considered that the development paradigm, which is linked to the Information Society, can only be applied to developed societies. And the starting point for this argument is that when we look at the very bases of the Information Society we see the postindustrial society, which we find in the thinking of

Daniel Bell, and a group of academics at Harvard in the 60's, more or less. And so, and the whole proposal is, does the Information Society correspond to a postindustrial society, and if this is the case, how can we apply the development paradigm to pre-industrial societies. Well, we believe that this is a contradiction to we believe that the benefit of the modern scientific-technological revolution can only be applied to developed countries. We think that on the contrary, technological and scientific revolution, the benefits of this revolution can be perfectly applied to developing countries as a way to accelerate their progress and development. And so, the very concept of Information Society as a new developing paradigm is completely applicable to developing societies as it is as well to developed societies.

Now, we are starting from an unequal position, as in everything, not only technology, but as in everything else. In New York City for example, they have more Internet users than the entire African Continent. In Finland, as a country, has more users than

all Latin America and the Caribbean. And only in the United States there is roughly a 40% of Internet users and Latin America is almost 2% on average. And so, we are starting from a position of inequality in the relation with nations that have a digital gap, as we have identified and named it. Now, this digital gap that exists, this disparity in terms of access to technology between developed countries and developing countries is only another challenge for developing countries to be able to move forward, to grow, and to be part of the civilization of the modern world. The question is how to do this, how do we effectively use the modern communication and information technologies as a tool for development and progress. Yesterday, we had a meeting here speaking about the challenges of globalization, the challenges of trade as part of the sustainable development of peoples and we said that it was crucial, in order to be able to capitalize on the benefits of globalization, every country should have a national development strategy, and I say that every country within their national developing strategy should have a national

developing strategy for technological development that should be part of their vision. Having a technological development strategy, and this technological development strategy can be set up on the basis of a consensus and alliance between different national players, starting with the governments, but incorporating the private sector, civil society, private sector and also academics. And I would go even further; there is a connection at the international level with business groups and academics sectors, which can promote national development. In our case, in the Dominican Republic, there is another important actor, how can be could be incorporated to this national development strategy, and that is the Diaspora, the Dominicans who live abroad, specially in the united States. And, for example, in the university system in New York City, we have 30 thousand young Dominicans who are studying in colleges. They are studying information technology, biotechnology, electronic engineering, etc. These are human resources, how have received training in the best universities in the world, and now it's a matter of design-



President Leonel Fernandez, UNCTAD XI, Note: President Fernandez was President Elect of the Dominican Republic during UNCTAD XI and represented the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo during said international forum.

ing new strategies to link them up with the internal development of the Dominican Republic. And I can see this in other coun-

tries as well, such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and other countries in the world that nationals who are immigrants and who have obtained working experience in important corporations or academic training; and the national authorities would have to identify those human resources and find a way to integrate them into their own national strategies. And so, in the Diaspora we have an intellectual and human resource, which is extremely valuable and important in order to accelerate the development of the Information Society within developing countries.

And now, if we have an alliance of different national players and if there is a strategy and a link with the outside world we have to recognize these serious challenges that have to be tackled so that we can make progress in this direction. The first tackle has to do with infrastructure. It is crucial that we have a minimum developed infrastructure in the country, as to the Information Society can be successful and prosper; we have to have proper infrastructure in the telecommunications area, for

example in our case, in the Dominican Republic, fortunately, we do have high quality telecommunications infrastructure; we can, we have a new telecommunications act that we adopted at the end of the 90's, which has made it possible to have more competition in the market place, and so we have companies such as Verizon, France Telecom, Centennial, etc., who compete in the Dominican market and as a result they try to offer a quality service to the users. This new telecommunications act in the Dominican Republic offers universal access and that means that companies must try to ensure that telephone service and telecommunications services, generally speaking, can cover the entire territory of the Republic, allowing access even to the remote rural areas, are very important phenomenon if we want to guarantee a minimum infrastructure.

I think that it's also crucial for the country to have a proper electrical service and that they have facilities where you can introduce new technologies that are the basis to the Information society. And, another



General Assembly, UNCTAD XI.

important element after infrastructure is to have properly trained human resources. The strategy that we have pursued in the Dominican Republic that we began in our last mandate, from 1996 to 2000, was to begin at the level of schools, and at the level of the government. In schools we introduced the plan to have computer programs connected to the Internet in all the high schools, and in the next programs we'd like to start from kindergarten to the eighth grade, and thus we would cover the entire educational cycle. And I do empha-

size the word public here, the public school system, and emphasize this because private school, almost all of them already have a course in Information technology. The problem is that, if public school, public school system doesn't incorporate in their curriculum information technology, there's going to be an internal digital gap within the country that is going to broaden social inequality in the mid-even long term; so the fact that the lower income families, their children, can receive training and education in the same conditions as middle class and



Information and Knowledge for Development Session, UNCTAD XI.

upper class families, these would make possible to eliminate, to reduce, and afterwards eliminate this digital gap, which we find within our society. And so, we have to start with the primary schools system in order to create digital opportunities, which are important to turn the information society into a new and developed paradigm. Apart

from the school system, I spoke about electronic government, and the fact, all the ministries, all the state agencies can have a website and that way they could have direct access to the information that comes from the government, in order to guarantee transparency as well as higher level of information, and for citizens who want to

be informed to take the proper decisions. But even so, even setting up an educational system throughout the country, we could still be leaving out people who live in remote areas and what we considered in our last government was to create technological communities centers in places that are remote, that don't have telephone access; with MIT to what we called small intelligent communities, low cost technologies that we could set up in about 20 communities in the country in order to guarantee that families of farmers, rural families, can have access to information technology. And I believe that schools in these technological community centers, universities, businesses, government; in this way the entire country is going to acquire this infrastructure, which would make it possible for it to become a new instrument and new tool for development.

The third challenge, which we see has to do with language. The Internet is dominated by English, and English as the dominant language, as the universal language in the use of the Internet... Obviously, China,

each day, because of the number of inhabitants, it has the largest number of Chinese language users; but elsewhere, English is the dominant language, when it comes to Internet use. I think we need a greater linguistic and cultural diversification in Internet use, and I'm pleased by about the efforts that are being taken care of by Spanish speaking countries to provide Spanish language content on the Internet and that, I would be grateful if other countries and other groups could find a way of expressing themselves through the Internet, but today, we see that, undoubtedly, language is a barrier and it can only be resolved if we create within the schools system, that English, if we set up English as a language should be learned by the end of the university program, and we are going to implement pilot bilingual education project at the public level; it exists at the, in private schools, and so this is also a social linguistic gap that has to be tackled effectively, so that we don't create another cultural gap besides the digital gap.

And finally, something that we said earlier, to



create relevant local contact; people can only become interested, they can only have a sense of identification with this technology if there is content which is developed locally and that will be useful and relevant to the users. Through the Global Foundation for Development of Democracy in the Dominican Republic we have been thinking about a project which I think could have a lot of significance in our country, which is a virtual Dominican university. We would create a national content that has to do with geography, history, economy, society, culture and arts in our country; all that is related to the Dominican Republic. And there would be a webpage where, besides reaffirming national identity, there would be information

that's useful for the different sectors in our country. And lastly, I do believe that with a strategic vision of how to adapt the use of the Internet to a development strategy, ICTs are extremely valuable tools in order to accelerate the process of sustainable development for our countries and at the same time achieve a better integration within the global economy, as so that citizens would have instruments which would allow their personal development as well, as well as the development of the entire country. Those are my general comments on this item, Mr. Chairman; I would like to thank you for having, giving me the floor today.

Thank you!

H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernández, President of the Dominican Republic

World Summit on the Information Society First Phase: Geneva 2003 Roundtable 3: ICT as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

11 December 2003

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

I would like to say that, from the debate we are having here this afternoon, there seems to stand two conflicting ideas, one, the problems of basic education, the problems of access to health care, seems to be a priority, a struggle in every day life to survive in the underdeveloped nations, it just seems to be a reluctance to face the challenges of digital divide, and I think that these apparent conflicting ideas must be reconciled.

In effect what we have is a problem coming out of reality. When the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) were first conceived it was part of the

post industrial society and when we talk about having basic education and health care as a priority, access to water supply or electricity, we are talking about the realities of a pre-industrial society, now the problem is how can we reconcile that, can we ignore the problems of the digital divide and concentrate and focus exclusively on the perennial problems of survival? I think that would be a mistake.

I think that we need to address both issues at the same time, and addressing the digital divide I will say that, all nations need to have, first of all, a national strategy for development and within that strategy for development there must be a specific role for access to ICTs. And within that, there





President Leonel Fernandez, WSIS 2003, Note: President Fernandez at WSIS 2003 in Geneva represented the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo as President an Founder during said Summit.

must be a partnership between government, private sector, and civil society. And the two basic issues will be how to have access to ICTs and how can we empower communities.

Now, in having access to ICTs, the Prime Minister from Bangladesh has said some-

thing that is very clear: you begin with a school system, installing computer labs in the school system that is the way you can democratize and massively distribute access to ICTs. The other way would be to install learning centers or community centers at the different neighborhoods, especially with low income families, in that way you can guarantee the access of the majority of the population to ICTs.

So instead of having two different opposing views, I think they could be reconciled in one national strategy and guarantee access to the majority of the population to this new technology and convert the digital divide into a digital opportunity for development.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

Honorable Dr. Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez,
First Lady of the Dominican Republic

In representation of H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic Head of Delegation to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Tunis

U.N. DESA High-Level Round Table on putting ICTs to work for the United Nations Development Agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals” 17 November 2005

Honorable José Antonio Ocampo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General,
Honorable Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
Distinguished international panelists,
Participants

On behalf of my husband, His Excellency, the President of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Leonel Fernández, who would have liked to be here with us today, it is an honor to share with you some thoughts to stimulate productive discussions on how we can



First Lady Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, WSIS 2005, Tunis.

overcome the challenges that keep us from leveraging the ICTs on a large scale as tools for the United Nations Development

Program, and turn the great challenge of the Digital Divide into a true Digital Opportunity that will allow us to develop a society that is socially inclusive, economically equitable, democratically egalitarian and with solidarity among the people.

I believe that today in Tunisia, after all we have achieved in the first phase of this Summit in Geneva and the recent World Summit in New York, we see the future full of hope because we know what we have to do throughout this decade ahead of us: prepare ambitious action plans to ensure compliance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and learn to use the ICTs as the leading mechanisms to achieve them.

In order to promote the ICTs as the engine of human and sustainable development, particularly through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we have to “localize” or “decentralize” the Goals to the rural and local levels, where extreme poverty plagues today’s societies.

My country, the Dominican Republic, is one

of the seven pilot countries of the United Nations Millennium Project—the only middle-income nation that is located outside of the African continent. We were the first to create a Presidential Commission for the Millennium Development Goals and we have concluded a Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment for each MDG target, as well as a Costing Analysis of the goods, services and infrastructure necessary to comply with such—all thanks to the active interaction of the Government, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations Country Team, among others.

We know where we are, where we have to go and how to get there. But we also know that the Dominican Government cannot do it alone. The cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the next ten years will be \$29.5 billion US Dollars and we have an annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of only approximately \$19 billion US Dollars.

This is why my husband, as President of the country, has called this to the attention of



High-Level Roundtable, WSIS 2005, Tunis.

all sectors, especially, multilateral financial institutions and has done so in places like the United Nations, last September.

But I, particularly, understand that achieving the Goals requires an extensive “National Pact,” great efforts and commitment from all of us.

I am also convinced that the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals has to start in the core cell of society, the families.

That is why we must “actively engage the

communities” hand in hand with technology—the driving force that can help us to achieve our objectives. This is the concept behind my program called “Progresando”, which is implemented by the Office of the First Lady of the Dominican Republic, in order to address the Millennium Development Goals at the local level while each “family makes progress.”

Progresando (Making Progress) is a rights-based program for socio-educational intervention aimed towards achieving integrated, sustainable and equitable human development. We build the skills, abilities, and

capabilities of each citizen so they can be active in forging their own destinies and creators of their own development.

In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we started to work with the poorest households, those that are most vulnerable, single mothers, through integrated education, teaching them to exercise their rights as human beings but also to fulfill their duties as members of society. Parents have the obligation to register their children on time, provide them with a birth certificate, enroll them in school and send them to class every day, assist with their homework and keep their vaccines up to date.

We create awareness among sexually active adults on HIV-AIDS prevention and early pregnancy; and pregnant women are educated on the need to have monthly check-ups, maintain a balanced diet and taking vitamins, folic acid, and minerals to prevent maternal-child mortality.

Now, as the Secretary of UNESCO has said, we must make the change from the

Learning Society to the Information Society and more so, the Knowledge Society, which means nothing more than to effectively utilize the infinite amount of information that we have the opportunity to access today through the network of networks.

This basic information is just the platform on which we want to establish the foundations to achieve quality education and the necessary revenues to train productive and competent individuals whose skills allow them to be competitive in this global village, to use the term coined by our recently departed Peter Drucker, based on a knowledge-intensive economy, more than a capital-intensive one where ideas are the greatest source of revenues and drivers of sustainable development.

The ICTs play a significant role for developing countries, like ours, to implement the dual agenda, through the application of science, technology and innovation in relation to the economic growth of said countries and compliance with the Millennium Development Goals. That is why my hus-

band and I have made ICTs a priority. Our Offices are setting up Community Technology Centers (CTC), one in each municipality, starting with rural and marginal urban communities in extreme poverty.

The Community Technology Centers are true Think Tanks, based on a telecommunications infrastructure with access to broadband services, community broadcasts, digital libraries, and educational programs to give these communities that have traditionally been excluded from socio-economic development, who are natural victims of the Digital Divide, easy and low-cost access to ICTs, as tools for their education, training and development.

An example of this panel's subject, concerning the CTCs is the program we have titled "Prepárate para Competir" (Prepare to Compete,) through which we offer education and training that is integrated, not formal, to young people and adults, including literacy programs and programs to finish primary education, through an educa-

tional portal, with a tailored method of permanent and continuous education, according to their interests. The scope of this program includes secondary education with English modules and support for entrepreneurship type initiatives.

Additionally, the program includes digital data resources, interactive activities, links to global educational networks and facilities for on-line conferencing.

This way they are taught, not only to read and write, through content that includes skills needed to participate in society, but at the same time, they are becoming digitally literate, and the end-result is human beings that are better prepared to lead productive lives.

These efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the Dominican Republic are creating a paradigm shift, where impoverished citizens are becoming part of the solution. I firmly believe that my husband's commitment towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the dedication of his Government as a pilot

country, coupled with the effort and desire of the communities to advance in the context of the new information society that we are building, can contribute to halving

poverty, in its many dimensions, by the year 2015. This is key to achieving this.

Thank you.

Honorable Dr. Margarita Cedeno de Fernandez,
First Lady of the Dominican Republic

**In representation of H.E. Dr. Leonel Fernandez,
President of the Dominican Republic
Launch of the Digital Solidarity Fund – DSF**

(Geneva, Switzerland) 14 March 2005

H.E. Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal and Founder of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

H.E. Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria and President of the African Union

H.E. Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and Secretary-General of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

H.E. Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

H.E. Mr. Michel Barnier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, France

H.E. Mr. Homero Luís Hernández Sánchez, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations and International Organizations,

Geneva, Switzerland

H.E. Mr. Pierre Muller, Mayor of the City of Geneva

H.E. Mr. Christian Ferrazino, Mayor of the City of Geneva and Spokesman for the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

Honorable Guy-Olivier Segond, President, Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

Honorable Alain Clerc, Executive Secretary, Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

Honorable Ligia Amada Melo de Cardona, Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (SEECyT)

John R. Gagain Jr., Executive Director, Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development





First Lady Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, Geneva, Switzerland; DSF Launch.

Domingo Tavaréz, Director-General, President's Office for Information and Communication Technologies.

On behalf of the Dominican Republic; my husband, President Leonel Fernández; and myself, I appreciate the invitations of Presidents Wade and Obasanjo, which allow my country to be present on this important occasion—the formal inauguration of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), which will open new opportunities for developing and least developed countries. By doing so, we will be able to enhance the mission of developing and expanding technology by including our

people in what we call the information and knowledge societies. Additionally, we especially appreciate the warm hospitality that we have received from our host and Mayor of the City of Geneva, Mr. Pierre Müller.

The advantages presented by the Information Society, represent a great revolution of which our people stand to benefit. Facilitating access to the Information Society for each community, home, and citizen; and making a transition from the pre-industrial era to the digital era, must be our overall national and international objectives, which will need the support of all Member States, their united efforts, as well as sufficient resources—all important and necessary for the achieving this goal.

The Dominican Republic is a small Caribbean country that shares the island of Santo Domingo with Haiti. With a size of 48,442 square kilometers and a population of 8.6 million inhabitants, more than 3 million live in conditions of extreme poverty, without basic necessities, without access to technologies, and excluded from the devel-

opment process and the potential benefits that globalization could offer.

The Dominican Government, conscious of the fact that poverty is not only a question of a level of income, but also, the inherent lack of opportunities and access to capacity building. These opportunities, should connect economic policies with an inclusive social program, which would guarantee the underprivileged access to benefits produced by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by playing a large role in promoting scientific, economic and social development throughout countries, eliminating the distances and time that separates them from the rest of the world as well as common knowledge.

The Dominican Republic, together with Senegal, has the honor of having been selected as one of the eight pilot countries of the United Nations Millennium Project, created by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and directed by distinguished economist Dr. Jeffrey Sachs. We believe that this wonderful initiative, proposed by President

Wade could be presented as a viable financial mechanism that would ensure that our countries, especially those of the African Union, achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Without a doubt, in today's global world, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have an impact on our everyday lives, because they permit the creation of wealth through the increase in production and competitiveness. It is important to recognize, however, that access to ICTs offers great opportunities for various countries, but could present a serious challenge for developing and least developed countries, of which we all represent. Frequently, the use of ICTs is limited to those more economically fortunate populations, which contributes precisely to the increase in the digital and social divides—not only among countries, but also within them.

During the last few years, the Dominican Republic's telecommunications sector has been of fundamental importance for the national economy, which fosters the

increase in “tele-density”, which has allowed us the ability to have 39 telephones for each 100 inhabitants, 11 of which are fixed-lines and 28 cellular. However, we have a low level of those with access to Internet services, with only 1.2 accounts for every 100 inhabitants, all of which are concentrated in the large cities where you will find all of the political, economic, and social echelon. Those that reside in the rural area and the marginalized urban outskirts remain detached from the benefits and opportunities offered by ICTs.

It is for this reason that President Leonel Fernandez has created an ambitious plan focused on closing the digital divide by improving access and connectivity, digital literacy, ICT capacity building, the development of an E-Government infrastructure, the technological capacity of educators, the promotion and use of E-Commerce tools, as well as business’s involvement in using ICTs.

With respect to the implementation of these projects, President Fernandez has appointed the Office of the First Lady the

work of making technology a service of the people, particularly those inhabitants of the most impoverished areas of the Dominican Republic. Because of this, we have developed a comprehensive and very ambitious plan to install 135 Community Technology Centers, one in each municipality throughout the country, so that those extremely poor communities have the opportunity to be a part of the development process as well as our social, cultural and economic advancement. The overarching goal of this plan is to contribute to the fight against poverty, inequality, and the digital divide in the Dominican Republic, all of which stands to be one of the utmost challenges of the 21st century. Fulfilling this goal will ensure that we strengthen and promote the “knowledge society” as well as our achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Each one of the Community Technology Centers will aim to build the capacity of the citizens of the community, their knowledge and ability to effectively utilize ICTs by making them part of their daily lives. The

Centers will allow access to telephone services, fax, Internet, universal knowledge; database creation, information processing, healthcare and environment best practices, and program training that prepare citizens to compete in the labor market.

In addition, our primary aim is that these Community Technology Centers become places where citizens could conduct commercial banking transactions, transmit documents; access E-Government services and virtual libraries; as well as create small businesses that benefit the local community and thrive by having access to updated ICTs.

From the Community Technology Centers, we will promote the design, execution, and application of programs that achieve the effective and profound inclusion of women and young girls in new technologies, which would increase gender equality at the local level—an important precedent for sustainable development and social justice.

Now we know that in order to implement and comply with the vision of President

Fernandez, projected since his first administration, it requires large investments, which present great challenges for the Dominican Republic, a country that is recuperating from one of the worst economic crises in its history. In order to fulfill the President’s long-term vision, the involvement and support of the private sector, civil society, high-tech corporations that produce ICTs, at both the national and international level, is vital.

We firmly believe that the Dominican Republic and other countries like ours will need to rely upon a Fund that would contribute to the financing of ICTs, as a mechanism for promoting health, employment, trade, production, quality education, and the creation of wealth for those low-income communities. It is important for ensuring our competitiveness in the long-term.

The greatest challenge that we confront is the development of a real connectivity agenda that permits extended access of all geographic points throughout the Dominican Republic.

Another challenge is accessing the required funds for guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the Community Technology Centers, from an economic as well as social standpoint. It is especially important to ensure that these communities benefit from the Community Technology Centers by assimilating themselves long enough to permit that the those users convert themselves into responsible citizens in a sustainable economy that benefits all equally.

On behalf of the Dominican Republic, my husband, and myself, I would like to give thanks to President Wade for his vision and leadership, and for having proposed the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which was held in the beautiful City of Geneva.

Also, to Guy Olivier Segond and Alain Clerc, President of the Digital Solidarity Fund and Executive Secretary, respectively as well as the Fund's spokesperson Christian Ferrazino for having permitted us to become founding member of this initia-

tive, which without a doubt, promises to be one of the most positive outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). On the same note, we would like to recognize the relentless efforts of those Member States of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) that worked to receive approval of the Fund during the Second Preparatory Committee meeting of the Tunis Phase of the WSIS.

We believe that the Launch of the Digital Solidarity Fund constitutes a historical step for our nations. It provides a tangible and viable opportunity for facilitating South-South cooperation in favor of ICTs and ensuring that we achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The initiative that we inaugurate today is without a doubt a positive step that facilitates the integration of developing and least developed countries in the reduction of the digital divide as well as their inclusion in the Information Society. The Government of the Dominican Republic and President Leonel Fernandez so happily accept with honor, the

opportunity to participate as founding member of this prestigious group of nations that compose the Digital Solidarity Fund. We reiterate our dedication to the "Geneva Principles" that form the norms of the Fund.

We look forward to playing an active role in this initiative, where we hope to offer our experience, our work and collaboration of a visionary government, which we hope you consider a friend in these efforts. We fervently believe that through the

opportunities offered by ICTs, we could achieve sustainable human development. In conclusion, I would like to leave you reflecting on the thoughts of the renowned author Victor Hugo who states and I quote: "The future has many names. For the weak, it is unachievable. For the fearful, it is unknown. For the courageous it is an opportunity." And, we firmly believe that this initiative is a true opportunity for all of us.

Thank you very much.

COMPENDIUM OF SPEECHES
ON INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND DEVELOPMENT



*Presidency of the
Dominican Republic*

