



United Nations

Statement

by

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Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

at the

**6th Annual Forum
on
City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region
(CIAPR VI)**

**18 October 2006
Shanghai, China**

Honorable Mayor of Shanghai, Mr. Han Zhen

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to speak before such an esteemed audience. Let me first thank the honorable Mayor, Mr. Han Zhen, for so kindly inviting me to this very important 6th Annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region.

I also wish to express deep appreciation to my colleagues in the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) for co-organizing this Forum with the Shanghai Municipality. My appreciation also goes to UNDP, UNIDO, UN Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, UNITAR and the UN ICT Task Force, as well as the Government of China, including the State Council Information Office, the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Commerce, as well as the Chinese Academy of Science, for co-sponsoring this Forum.

Shanghai is indeed a “World City”. Each time I visit I am impressed and encouraged by the dynamism and vibrancy of the city.

Connecting people around the world for sustainable development is not only a high priority for the United Nations but a top priority for all nations, especially the world’s most vulnerable countries. I am, therefore, very pleased that this year’s Forum has chosen the theme “ICT for a Better Life: The Role of Local Government”.

Equally impressive is the pragmatic approach adopted by this Forum. It is critical that participants be given the space to share their innovative experiences at both the federal

or local levels. This allows us to learn from each other so that we are able to provide better public service delivery; improve connectivity and access for all; facilitate business and development and encourage people participation and citizen engagement.

These are extremely important issues for all developing countries, especially for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. These groups of countries require special attention and support to be a part of the global information society. Although fulfilling the basic needs of the millions of vulnerable people is undoubtedly the number one priority, they should not be marginalized in the ever-widening process of globalization. Their lack of human, material and financial resources, and indeed, technologies, jeopardize their sustainable development and highlight their need for an increased support and cooperation of the international community in their efforts to enhance capacity in ICT.

Communication and information technology is also very relevant for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Almaty Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries and the Mauritius Strategy for the Small Islands Developing States.

The Brussels Programme, for example, has set a number of measurable targets which include: increasing computer literacy among students in higher institutions and universities by 50% and in junior and schools by 25% by 2015; and increasing average telephone density to 5 main lines per 100 inhabitants and internet connections to 10 users per 100 inhabitants by the year 2010.

Over the past decade the number of telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population in the LDCs went from 0.27 to 2.21 while the number of personal computers in use per 100 population rose from 0.12 to 0.56.

Faced with these challenges, these vulnerable groups of countries are making big efforts with the support of the international community.

According to International Telecommunication Union's report on ICT & Telecommunication Development in LDCs released last month, 25 of the 50 LDCs have met their teledensity targets set by the Brussels Programme. Their number of mobile subscribers almost doubled in 2005, as compared to five years ago. Prepaid services, accounting for almost 90% of the entire market, have contributed to the explosive expansion of the mobile sector in LDCs.

By 2005, internet user penetration caught up with fixed line penetration in LDCs, providing access to a host of applications, such as e-education, e-health, e-agriculture, and e-government. Although the majority of the LDCs have not yet launched high-speed internet services, popular demand is encouraging more countries to up-grade from dial-up internet connections to broadband. For instance, by 2005, over 89% of all internet subscribers in Senegal were DSL subscribers.

Despite recent progress, the most vulnerable countries continue to face major challenges. Rapid developments in the LDC's information and telecommunications marketplace require new measures to be taken by policymakers, regulators and market players. To close the "digital divide", leadership and capacity development in the most vulnerable countries are essential.

However, it is essential that these disadvantaged countries are given increased technical and financial assistance from the international community to put in place appropriate policy regimes; to develop ICT infrastructure and to ensure universal access by their citizens to electronic services. I sincerely hope that the successful experiences, the technical capacities, and the excellent services in municipal e-education, e-health, e-business, and e-government, provided by the CIAPR could be extended also to other developing regions, in support of our efforts to form a Global Alliance for the Most Vulnerable Countries for the betterment of the lives of their people.

I hope that the discussions during this Forum would contribute to meeting these challenges facing the most vulnerable developing countries, through the promotion of inter-country, regional and international cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, and ultimately contribute to the economic and social progress in the rural and urban areas across the global South, especially the most vulnerable among them.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.
