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Chairperson: Ms. Lintonen (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Sustainable development (continued)

- (a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.13 and L.23)

Draft resolution on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

1. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.13 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Draft resolution on agricultural technology for development

2. **Mr. Fluss** (Israel), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.23, announced that Madagascar had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. Agriculture had always played a crucial role in development, especially in developing countries. The draft resolution was in line with calls for action under Agenda 21 and reflected the agenda for the upcoming cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development. He invited other delegations to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

- (b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.16)

Draft resolution on follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

- (d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.12)

Draft resolution on protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

- (f) Convention on Biological Diversity (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.15)

Draft resolution on the Convention on Biological Diversity

- (g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fourth session (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.14)

Draft resolution on the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fourth session

3. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolutions A/C.2/62/L.12, L.14, L.15 and L.16 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

4. Referring also to sub-item 54 (a), she noted that the Group of 77 and China had consistently called for simultaneous action to address the challenges relating to all three pillars of sustainable development in a coordinated, integrated and balanced manner. At the national and international levels, economic, social and environmental goals should be promoted in complementary and consistent ways. The Group looked forward to discussing the various draft resolutions that would be submitted under the item, while seeking to retain a focus on poverty eradication as a prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development in developing countries.

- (h) Sustainable mountain development (continued)** (A/C.2/62/L.18)

Draft resolution on sustainable mountain development

5. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.18, announced that Eritrea and Timor-Leste had become sponsors. The sponsors looked forward to discussing the draft with the remaining membership during informal discussions and trusted that a consensus text would soon be ready for submission to the Committee.

Agenda item 55: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (continued) (A/C.2/62/L.22)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

6. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.22 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 51: Information and communication technologies for development (A/62/492-S/2007/616)

7. **The Chairperson** said that, since the Committee did not have before it a report of the Secretary-General, its consideration of the item would be framed by statements by Member States. She stressed the continued importance of the subject. The more the international community, national Governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders accomplished in bridging the digital divide, promoting digital opportunities and placing information and communication technologies (ICT) at the service of development, the better they would understand both the immense potential of ICT as a tool for promoting development and the scope of the tasks to be accomplished.

8. The item was being considered pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/295, which called for a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system. ICT was a valuable strategic tool for enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and development impact of United Nations system programmes and activities. In that context, she mentioned the recent implementation of the proposal to raise the profile and impact of ICT in the Secretariat's programmatic direction by establishing the post of Chief Information Technology Officer at a policymaking level.

9. The development potential of the information revolution had been highlighted by the Assembly during its discussions on the implications of globalization in 1998 and subsequently addressed at its meeting on ICT for development in 2002. The World Summit on the Information Society, meanwhile, had formulated an agreed universal approach to creating a truly global development-oriented, inclusive and people-centred information society and defined a set of concrete actions to that end. The United Nations was spearheading the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action. In that context, she mentioned the Connect Africa Summit held recently in Rwanda, which had resulted in investment and other commitments of over \$70 billion aimed at bringing broadband, high-speed and low-cost connectivity to the continent by 2012 and thereby fostering the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

10. The Assembly must remain actively seized of the matter. The international community had only just begun its work in building a truly inclusive and

development-oriented information society. The political support and engagement of all stakeholders was essential to build momentum and make such a major undertaking possible by 2015.

11. **Mr. Bhandara** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, for the majority of the world's poor, the developmental promise of science and technology remained unfulfilled. Instead of bridging the gap, technology had often become a great divider. The growing North-South technological gulf must be bridged. Creating links between knowledge-generation and development was one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries.

12. The World Summit on the Information Society had been held to address the ever-wider digital divide facing developing countries. The Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society provided the vision and a vehicle for bridging that divide. The Group called for the full implementation of the outcomes of both phases of that Summit so as to allow developing countries to benefit fully from the potential of ICT.

13. ICT was a powerful tool for socio-economic development that offered many opportunities to disadvantaged sectors of society and, if used properly, contributed to poverty eradication and attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The creation of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society was in the best interests of all people, but particularly the large majority of the world's population who faced exclusion and in whose development modern ICT played a vital role.

14. The Internet should be managed through a multilateral, transparent and democratic process that involved Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Effective monitoring of progress on the implementation of the outcomes of both phases of the World Summit on the Information Society was essential. The international community must remain engaged to ensure that the digital divide was bridged. The General Assembly should play a more active and visible role in that regard. To that end, the Group would be submitting a draft resolution requesting the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the follow-up process.

15. **Ms. Hartati** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that ICT had opened up new opportunities for attaining higher levels of development. It increased productivity; generated economic growth, job creation and employability; improved quality of life; and promoted dialogue among people, nations and civilizations. However, the digital divide was still a major challenge. As noted in the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, Internet and mobile phone use, while generally on the rise, was still limited in developing countries. ICT must continue to be promoted to free the world's poor from underdevelopment, marginalization and social exclusion.

16. She expressed appreciation for the Organization's efforts to strengthen the linkage between ICT and development and increase knowledge-sharing across the entire United Nations system; commended the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other United Nations agencies for their work on reducing the digital divide; and welcomed the Organization's support for the use of open-source software for development, which was a tool not only for enhancing economic opportunities, but also for managing and harnessing information. The Organization's role in strengthening the linkages between ICT and the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, must be enhanced, including by enabling and catalysing initiatives aimed at providing policy advice and technical assistance in the development of national e-strategies. She called on the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress and challenges in that regard. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnership must continue to be promoted. In that regard, she welcomed the launch, in 2006, of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development.

17. ASEAN attached great importance to the development of the ICT sector. Its efforts to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015 continued. The AEC Blueprint, to be adopted at the forthcoming thirteenth ASEAN Summit in Singapore, would map out detailed targets and timelines for greater economic integration. ASEAN was also committed to implementing the Vientiane Action Programme, including its provisions on the telecommunications and information technology sectors. In particular, it sought to achieve universal access to

ICT infrastructure and services and strengthen cooperation and assistance on regulatory policy and strategy issues. As reflected in the Declaration adopted at the seventh meeting of ASEAN telecommunications and information technology ministers, held in Cambodia in August 2007, ASEAN would step up its efforts to ensure equal and affordable universal access to ICT services to all people, particularly those living in rural communities and rural areas.

18. The Association's efforts to improve ICT-related cooperation included the establishment of an ASEAN ICT Centre in 2006 and the ASEAN ICT Fund's first disbursement plan for 2007-2008. In addition, the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre sent daily satellite images of the region's weather to each ASEAN member country and the ASEAN Earthquake Information Centre used the Internet and text messaging to transmit instantaneous information to ASEAN member countries for disaster preparedness. As a supplement to those frameworks, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center linked national tsunami early warning centres with a multi-nodal system through the exchange of real time information. ASEAN had also established ICT cooperation work plans with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Those countries — as well as the European Union and India — had also participated in the incident drill conducted by ASEAN computer emergency response teams in July 2007. ASEAN supported the Tunis Commitment's pledge to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society.

19. Lastly, the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies had played a commendable role in promoting cooperation in the area of climate change mitigation, adaptation and financing. ASEAN hoped that the United Nations would continue along that path, including by using ICT to manage environmental data for sustainable development and disaster mitigation and preparedness.

20. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that ICT had accentuated the disparities in the global economic system, as witnessed by the digital divide, and thus could be a source of exclusion and marginalization. On the other hand, the ICT sector had the potential to accelerate economic and human development and could therefore also be seen as promoting development.

21. The implementation of the commitments entered into at the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the

Information Society should be at the centre of the debate on ICT for development. The international community should therefore endeavour to implement the national, regional and international plans agreed at that Summit with a view to establishing an open, balanced and equitable information society.

22. While progress had been made in terms of access to ICT, the digital divide had still not been bridged since advances had been seen only in particular sectors and not in terms of modern technology as a whole. Owing to its capacity to accelerate the development process and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, ICT would determine future living standards and promote development and integration in the world economy. For developing countries, particularly the poorest ones, the digital divide was first and foremost a question of infrastructure and social investment. Thus, there was not only a technological but also a socio-economic challenge, since ICT could not replace a real development policy. The targeted integration of ICT, within a framework of international cooperation and partnership, could activate the development process and improve results.

23. His delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/8, which requested the Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development annually on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. It also welcomed the forthcoming holding of the 2007 Internet Governance Forum meeting in Rio de Janeiro as an occasion to continue the debate on the Internet that had begun in Athens in November 2006.

24. **Mr. Chen Ming** (China) welcomed the tremendous amount of work done by the United Nations and the International Telecommunication Union in implementing the outcomes of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. It was important to build a people-centred, development-oriented information society to narrow the digital divide, achieve the Millennium Development Goals, promote economic development and facilitate the dissemination and application of knowledge.

25. China had made encouraging progress in ICT development in recent years and such technologies had become an important means of supporting China's socio-economic development. The contribution of information technology to the economy was rising

steadily: its added value had accounted for 7.2 per cent of GDP in 2005 and 16.6 per cent of economic growth. More than 30 per cent of China's total exports were manufactured electronic and information technology products.

26. However, China also needed to urgently address such problems as its inadequate capacity for information technology innovation, the insufficient tapping of its information technology potential and the widening digital divide. In order to accelerate the movement towards an information society, his Government had published a national strategy for ICT development, 2006-2020, with the following goals: building an integrated information structure throughout the nation; greatly enhancing national capacity for information technology innovation; optimizing the entire structure of the information technology industry; providing robust safeguards for national information security; achieving tangible results in ICT-enabled social and economic development; establishing a new model for industrialization; creating a much improved institutional environment and developing a complete policy system for ICT development; and boosting the capacity of Chinese nationals to apply information technology. When all those goals had been met, China would have laid a solid foundation for an information society.

27. The strategic priorities of ICT for development in China were, inter alia: promoting ICT-enabled national economic development; facilitating e-government; fostering an advanced network culture; working towards ICT-enabled social development; improving integrated information infrastructure; strengthening the development and use of information resources; and enhancing the competitiveness of the information technology industry.

28. The use of ICT for development should be guided by demand, allowing the market to play a fundamental role in resource distribution. The general public should also find ICT accessible, affordable and easy to use. Furthermore, ICT should be allowed to achieve its full potential in the promotion of economic, political, cultural, social and military development.

29. The international community needed to establish and improve mechanisms for international exchange and cooperation related to ICT for development while also upholding the principles of equal cooperation and mutual benefit. It also needed to combat Internet-

related crimes and build an international governance mechanism for the Internet based on equal sovereignty. The United Nations should set an example in sharing knowledge in the area of development and should continue to play a leading role in building an information society.

30. **Mr. Mubin** (Malaysia) said that the digital divide was one of the major challenges facing developing countries and that much more could be done to eliminate it. While the multi-stakeholder approach towards ICT advancement was a step in the right direction, mainstreaming ICT for the sake of development alone was insufficient. In order to bridge the digital divide effectively, the technology that made the advancement of knowledge possible must be widely shared.

31. Beyond the issues of physical access and connectivity, ICT advancement also had a huge impact on economic and social development. As the world moved towards becoming a "global village", it was important to continue to retain the richness and diversity of ICT content, culture, values and communities. Content issues should dominate policies and strategies geared towards generating new economic wealth and fostering job creation. The new knowledge economy should also provide effective solutions for poverty eradication and economic development. The real value of ICT could be better realized when innovation provided greater access to global resources and information. It was therefore important to provide an enabling environment for innovation. To that end, the promotion and advancement of ICT must be facilitated by a proper intellectual property framework that benefited the poor and the disadvantaged in particular.

32. Since knowledge and ICT-enabled development were a means to an end, not an end in themselves, they must be linked to overall development programmes. Many readily available technologies could have a significant socio-economic impact on development. For example, the use of advanced ICT could easily enable farmers in developing countries to increase their productivity, which was an invaluable tool for eradicating poverty.

33. In order to ensure that ICT for development was used appropriately, it should, inter alia: be championed by the United Nations and other multilateral agencies; become a networking platform for economic wealth

creation and for enhancing societal value; focus on content, applications, community, cultures and other non-technical issues; and be centred on information security, thereby providing a trusted environment.

34. The establishment of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development as a model for a multi-stakeholder platform within the United Nations system would facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community should lend its full support to the Global Alliance as a platform for engaging all United Nations stakeholders as well as the World Bank and other regional development banks. Such a global platform could promote ICT policy dialogues and partnerships for action. Malaysia's active participation therein had enabled it to benefit from a wide variety of expertise in the field of ICT for development and to turn its ideas into reality, particularly the Cyber Development Corps, an initiative to promote capacity-building through South-South cooperation.

35. Within the framework of the World Congress on Information Technology to be held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2008, Malaysia would also host a high-level meeting of the Global Alliance. His delegation invited all Member States to actively participate in that high-level meeting, which was an opportunity to discuss the future agenda of ICT for development and Alliance activities.

36. **Mr. Naik** (India) said that ICT for development was of particular importance to developing countries in view of its immense potential to assist them in their development efforts in almost every field. His delegation therefore called for concerted efforts by the United Nations to assist developing countries in acquiring such technologies.

37. The global economy had recently seen a shift from agriculture and manufacturing towards services, which presented a special opportunity for developing countries. By effectively using their comparative advantage in terms of human capital, developing countries could hope to reap the benefits of that shift more equitably and should also witness an increase in employment. However, their primary challenge was to develop appropriate human resources through capacity-building and to make ICT more affordable and user-friendly. The international community should therefore extend its technical and financial support, particularly through the United Nations, to ensure that developing

countries could make ICT accessible to millions. In that regard, his delegation supported the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its enhanced mandate on the follow-up process to the World Summit on the Information Society.

38. India had been striving to take advantage of the information technology revolution. Information technology-enabled services, in particular, represented 5 per cent of India's economic output, as opposed to only 1.2 per cent at the turn of the century. Business process outsourcing had been a key element in the rapid growth of global services trade, leading to the acceptance of an information technology-based global delivery model. The employment generated from the growth in the information technology sector had had a positive impact on the socio-economic dynamics of his country, giving rise to a number of additional businesses. The information technology sector also testified to the fact that the private and State sectors could work together successfully.

39. His Government was committed to harnessing the benefits of ICT in diverse areas and, to that end, had launched an ambitious programme to promote e-governance at all levels and initiated a programme to provide information technology to the most remote parts of the country. It was also working to make ICT affordable to the general public. Within the framework of South-South cooperation, India had also been providing assistance in setting up a connectivity project in 53 African countries and in establishing information technology training centres in several partner countries in Africa and Asia.

40. **Ms. Niyomthai** (Thailand) said that the United Nations system should explore possibilities for multilateral public-private partnerships to promote capacity-building for developing countries. Thailand took note with satisfaction of the ongoing work of the United Nations on the use of open-source software for development. Thailand had made progress in the use of ICT to further its development goals. In 2003, the e-Government Roadmap had been launched. The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology had been established as the competent agency to systematically build up the country's ICT capacity. Education was an important tool for promoting human-centred development in order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained economic and social development. In 1995, the Government had initiated a long-distance

learning project through which lessons were transmitted via satellite to over 3,000 schools throughout the country, including in remote rural areas.

41. The Government had initiated many development projects to improve the standard of living of the people through telecommunication technology. Remote sensing and a Geographic Information System mapping mechanism had been applied to monitor illicit crops and promote crop-substitution programmes, as well as for land-use and disaster-prevention projects. The first Thai Earth Observation System (THEOS) was scheduled to be launched in December 2007 with the capability to explore and monitor activities involving the utilization of natural resources, agricultural land, forestry and water resources, as well as urban growth. With the launch of THEOS, Thailand would take on a new role of data provider for various applications in other interested countries.

42. **Mr. Al Khaili** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country included in its development plans policies to promote ICT. It had acceded to numerous international instruments and participated in conferences and summits in that field. It reaffirmed its commitment to international efforts to build information societies for human advancement; understanding and cooperation among peoples; the dialogue of civilizations; establishment of the foundations of justice, equality and freedom; and respect for State sovereignty, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations calling for respect for the human being and cultural and religious diversity.

43. National legislation guaranteed the free flow of information and access to sources of knowledge and culture via global communication channels, provided that personal freedoms, human dignity and the country's established religious and political beliefs were not compromised. That openness had led to a flourishing ICT industry, a field for which the country had become a world centre, hosting conferences and even film festivals.

44. His country's policy on ICT for development was aimed at establishing the necessary infrastructure for an information and communication environment covering the entire country and ensuring access by all at reasonable cost. In the economic sphere, it called for investment in information technology and the knowledge economy based on public-private partnership that included enormous Government projects, such as

Dubai Internet City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, and Dubai Media City, which included Dubai Studio City, devoted to cinema and television production. In addition, a \$54 million fund, the first of its kind in the Middle East, had been established for the development of the country's information sector. In the cultural sphere, policy was aimed at implanting technological culture and offering the opportunity to all segments of society to enjoy its benefits, which meant introducing ICT curricula at all educational levels, creating specialized university faculties and ensuring adequate training in that area.

45. It was important to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries to enable them to put information technology in the service of development.

46. **Mr. Prasai** (Nepal) said that the application of ICT for development should be a shared global responsibility. Additional commitments from developed countries were needed for the transfer of technology and resources to the developing countries, especially the least developed countries. The multi-stakeholder approach of the Global Alliance should be strengthened. The Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society should be implemented effectively, with increased opportunities for applying ICT for development.

47. In Nepal, wireless technology provided tremendous benefits for people in rural areas who otherwise would not have access to ICT. That window of opportunity should be used for advancing the use of ICT for development. The availability of cheaper computers would also facilitate their use in developing countries. Nepal encouraged the proposal for "one laptop per child", especially in the least developed countries. However, the application of ICT in rural areas should respect the cultural and traditional values of societies. Nepal had integrated ICT into its national development policies and programmes. Community and FM radio broadcasts had become highly successful, and broadband Internet service was being expanded, although on a limited scale. The Government was seeking to attract investment and had set up an institutional mechanism to develop the ICT sector. Additional resources for ICT capacity-building were needed from Nepal's development partners.

48. A just, inclusive and pro-poor information and communication order should be at the centre of

development. It would be crucial to have a broad multi-stakeholder agreement on future action, including on the transfer of technology, additional commitments for resources to use ICT for development, and an agreement to make the advances in ICT available to all without artificial barriers.

49. **Mr. Kononuchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the United Nations should lead a coordinated approach to the use of ICT to achieve development goals, close the digital divide and develop a global information society. The Russian Federation was well placed to assist in attaining those goals thanks to its experience in adopting the latest ICT using the most economical methods, which was extremely important when resources were limited. The first stage of activity of the Global Alliance had proceeded well; its practical work must be clearly focused on the goals and tasks agreed by Member States.

50. **Mr. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that additional reflection on the role of parliaments in the information society was both necessary and timely. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in conjunction with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with the assistance of a number of particularly active parliaments, had therefore launched in 2006 a new and inclusive project known as the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament. The Centre was an innovative example of partnership between the United Nations and the world of parliaments. Its philosophy was one of cooperation and sharing of good practices among parliaments.

51. The activities of IPU included an international conference, hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies in March 2007, which had addressed the issue of the role of parliaments in the information society. The first World e-Parliament Conference, held in Geneva in October 2007, had examined the policy and technical aspects of how parliaments were using ICT. In countries where resources were scarce, one of the first objectives of a democratic parliament must be to ensure that legislation was widely accessible to citizens. The Union was committed to working with other like-minded partners to develop and share good practices in the use of open standards, open-source software and parliamentary websites. The adoption of such practices would help parliaments become more effective and transparent.

52. The Union was also looking forward to the publication of the first Global Report on ICT in Parliament in early 2008, which would establish much-needed baseline data on how parliaments around the world were using ICT. Another important initiative in 2008 would focus on how ICT could reduce barriers to access to information for people with disabilities, and specifically the role parliaments could play in promoting access and appropriate technologies. It was to be hoped that the structured relationship between IPU and the United Nations would reinforce the conviction that the two organizations could cooperate over the long term, share experiences, take joint initiatives and forge common policies.

Agenda item 129: Programme planning

53. **The Chairperson** said that she had been informed by the Secretariat that, at the present juncture, there were no matters that would require the Committee's attention under item 129. She therefore suggested that the item should remain open until the Committee finished its work on 30 November, in case there was a need for the Committee to be seized of any issues under it.

54. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.