

Address by H.E. Mr Nunzio Alfredo D'Angieri
Head of Delegation, Permanent Representative of Belize
Geneva, 12 December 2003

Mr Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General,
Mr Chairman,
Your Majesties, Heads of State, Ministers, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is for me a great pleasure to be representing my country at this Summit, in the knowledge that all of us are working together in an effort to improve the condition of humanity throughout the world.

Thanks to the opportunities provided to us by the World Wide Web, the world in which we live has become so small that all of us are now responsible for the well-being of our brothers and sisters wherever they may be, from Oceania, China, India, the European Union to the Americas. The unrestricted exchange of information that is now within reach of everyone has revolutionized our lives, whether at the level of global trade or of the means that enable us to communicate with our friends and families. At the same time, and paradoxically, we now find ourselves faced with the great responsibility of having to contribute to progress within society and to consider the social aspects of that progress.

Having said these things, it is nevertheless the view of my Government that the dissemination of knowledge is meaningless if it is not fully available to all nations and cultures throughout the world. We are, moreover, convinced that, through the appropriate and adequate use of information technologies, vital transformations could be set in motion in the interests of social progress covering all nations and corresponding to people's vital needs such as education, health, the environment, equal rights and the preservation of human dignity.

Our aim at this Summit is to make information technology more accessible and useful for least developed countries, whose governments are keen to improve the situation of their peoples. It is essential that those governments be provided with all manner of assistance in their steadfast effort to bring about social equilibrium. Nor must we forget that it is people, not technology, that can change the world, and that in order to do so we must work together.

It is a well-known fact that scientific research leads to the development of new technologies and to the generation of data and information that can in itself be of immense benefit to populations. Universal access must be adopted by governments as part of their strategy, which must in particular be geared towards improving the adaptation of content to local conditions, reforming the support that is given to project development and ensuring the sharing of experience.

The sustainable enhancement of capacities and initiatives in the field of education must be fostered so as to ensure that all countries can benefit from the new opportunities now before us for the production and sharing of information and scientific data. It goes without saying that this phenomenon is doubly significant for the least developed countries. In Belize, we have been successfully working along these lines. We are building schools that are open to all, including the Mayan peoples and immigrants. The Government of Belize lays priority on the fact that everyone should have the right to education, including training in the technological, communication and computing fields.