

27 November 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening Session of the Conference “The Positive Impact of the  
ICT on the Environment and Climate Change”**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Global Alliance for ICT and Development for inviting me to make a few brief remarks at the opening of this important conference.

Our theme is highly topical at the moment and something I feel strongly about.

Over the past centuries technological innovations have had huge impacts on the way we live, the way we do business, and our economic and political development – often with detrimental effects on our environment.

Today we must ensure that innovations, particularly those that improve the way we communicate, are beneficial to ecosystems and the world’s climate.

For example, without the proper environmental precautions the manufacturing processes and materials necessary to produce microprocessors - at the very heart of the technological revolution – can have serious long-term implications on the environment.

The big challenge today, particularly for the private sector, is to develop technologies that have minimal impacts on the environment and the climate.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are an integral component of all aspects of our ‘networked’ societies and economies. They will have a huge role in achieving these objectives.

ICTs can provide the opportunity to mobilize our ingenuity by accelerating the development of new technologies that put us on the path to sustainable development and low carbon growth.

ICTs are clearly important tools, catalysts, and instruments that can contribute to the preservation of our environment and the stabilization of the world’s climate. But like all tools, success depends as much on how we use them as who has them.

This means we have to bridge the digital divide - especially in Africa. To communicate efficiently worldwide boosts business, helps to promote sustainable development, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Excellencies,

The recent report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in Valencia has confirmed unequivocally that climate change is induced by human behaviour.

Let me also reiterate the common conviction expressed by world leaders at the High Level meeting here in September: the time for talking has ended; the time for action has begun.

We have no choice but to open our minds, and hearts, and embrace this call for action. Without action climate change will transform the way we all live in future.

It will also have a huge impact on the way this Organization pursues its objectives in development, peace and security, human rights and the rule of law. Inevitably, ICTs will be more integrated into our work in future.

ICTs can assist to monitor and analyze the causes and effects of climate change. In fact, observation and early warning capabilities are of critical importance for many vulnerable countries.

Early warning systems can reduce the risk and impact of dangerous weather and natural disasters.

ICTs will be instrumental in helping to develop new, climate-friendly technologies that can help economies grow sustainably and reduce emissions in the years ahead.

Government's actions to address climate change will also provide a new platform for technology and service industries.

Technology has already offered numerous climate-friendly solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon sequestration is just one important element.

The business community can develop other innovations, knowledge and technologies – turning climate problems into opportunities.

However, we do not always have to think of huge investments and large scale projects. Each of us can significantly reduce our carbon footprint in our daily lives by using smart ICTs. For example, instead of traveling to business meetings we can use new video-conferencing technology.

As consumers we all have the opportunity to vote with our wallets – by creating demand for products that are climate friendly. This is not limited to cars and refrigerators, but also includes ICTs that are efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Our choices as consumers in turn influence investment and the research and development of new technologies.

Our spending patterns affect politics and the decisions that governments make to appeal to their electorates. In many countries this bottom-up process is being accelerated by ICT based e-government initiatives that bring government closer to the people.

But consumers also need incentives. And here governments have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to shape behavior through a mix of policy interventions. The use of the tax system is just one means to create incentives for individuals and business.

Information and communication technologies built around environmentally friendly principles can push us toward a greener more sustainable, low carbon world.

This process needs to be complemented by the pull of global and local governance structures, where there are suitable incentives and a proper regulatory framework in place, such as a global mitigation and trading framework for carbon.

Excellencies,

History has taught me to be optimistic when considering our common fate. This includes the fate of the environment. We always have the opportunity to change our individual and collective behavior.

The warming climate has given us the opportunity to profoundly reconsider our relationship with the planet.

Addressing it provides a real opportunity for a new kind of global consciousness where we may once again live in harmony with nature - technology must help not hinder this fragile relationship.

And today, we are witnessing the rise of a new generation that regards the environment as an integral part of the way we live.

We now have the possibility to develop a new framework that sees economic growth, social justice and environmental care advance hand in hand.

If we do not safeguard our natural inheritance – the environment – for our children, we risk losing our relationship to it, and maybe also a part of our humanity.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you all a very fruitful discussion.