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INFORMAL INTERACTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HEARINGS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010

REDUCING THE COST OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE AND PROMOTING LOCAL ICT INDUSTRY IN LDCS

UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK
22 JUNE 2006

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1 PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR INFORMAL INTERACTIVE HEARINGS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010

THEME Forging Partnership with Civil Society and the Private Sector for Poverty Reduction in the Least Developed Countries

VENUE: ECOSOC Chamber

Morning 10.00 – 11:00

- Opening Statement of the President of the General Assembly;

- Statement by Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States;

- Keynote statement by a representative of NGOs/Civil Society/Private Sector.

11.00 – 1:00 First session:

- Harnessing partnerships for sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries.

Afternoon 3.00 – 5.00 Second Session:

- Unleashing entrepreneurship to end poverty in the Least Developed Countries.

5.00 – 5.45 Closing of the Hearings

2 MR. AQUARO'S SPEECH AT THE INFORMAL INTERACTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HEARINGS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010

REDUCING THE COST OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE AND PROMOTING LOCAL IT INDUSTRY IN LDCS

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The recently released UNDP Report on Governance as well as Commitment Two of the Brussels Programme of Action underline the necessity for good governance at both the national and international levels, specifically through "transparent, accountable, and efficient institutions and practices within the Government, the private sector, and civil society."

Information and Communications Technologies today is seen not only as a tool but probably the most important tool if this commitment has to be realized.

I would like to quote the Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia His Excellency Meles Zenawi that better explains the potential of ICT for poor countries.

I quote:
"We were convinced that we should invest every penny we have on securing the next meal for our people. We did not believe serious investment in ICT had anything to do with facing the challenges of poverty that kills. Now I think we know better. We recognize that while ICT may be a luxury for the rich, for us the poor countries, it is a vital and essential tool for fighting poverty – for beating poverty that kills – and ensuring our survival."
Unquote

While we agree that ICT applications play an important role in the implementation of sustainable MDG-based strategies, we also know that inadequacy of financial support - especially as significant public investments are required to spur local scientific innovation and technological development - is a key impediment to strengthening governance.

Is there a way to overcome this impediment?

Most developed countries have successfully developed eGovernment applications in key areas, such as Justice, Security, Healthcare, Welfare, Transport and Education.

These applications are used as powerful tools to create public administration that embodies the core values of democratic governance, including transparency, accountability, responsiveness and participation.

Most of these applications already in use in developed countries could be easily duplicated, re-deployed and put in use in poor countries without having to reinvest and using only at a fraction of the initial development costs - to support their local innovation and technological development.

If executed, such a program would have far reaching impacts on the national economies of the LDCs in general and in the field of governance in particular.

In the spirit of encouraging North South cooperation, I would urge the developed countries owning such e-governance applications to make available their in-use software to the poor countries for free.

Without enabling access to ICTs, these member-states will have difficulty improving their governance universally recognized as critical to economic, social and political development and towards achieving the MDGs.

I must emphasize here, that sharing best practices and ICT knowledge transfer needs a permanent exchange framework amongst all the stakeholders and I present my recommendations in this regard.

- **Firstly**, at the international level, the donor countries have to offer for free their best e-governance software investments to the LDCs; at the national level the donors have to encourage software-reuse, open source technologies and multi-languages software interfaces in their ICT development.

- **Secondly**, poor countries have to create an enabling environment to facilitate the knowledge transfer, ensure compatibility and sustainability with regard to infrastructures, local industries and human capital

- **Thirdly,** as we focus here on the review of the BPOA, my next set of recommendations focus on the vital role that the United Nations can play in facilitating the creation of this framework.

  - The United Nations must support and facilitate effective partnerships for ICT knowledge transfer amongst member-states, public administrations, Civil Society and all stakeholders; encouraging North-South and South-South cooperation towards e-governance software reuse initiatives;

  - The UN must support the creation and the upgrading of an inventory of such e-government applications that can be shared;

  - The UN must provide legal and technical support for the local deployment of such applications;

  - The UN must support negotiations towards significant reduction of the cost of software licences and copyright issues for the poor countries that wish to implement e- government applications;

  - The UN must oversee the legal and bilateral terms of the technology transfer;

To conclude, I would like to refer once again to the UNDP report on governance which recognizes that increase in ODA in an effort to boost development may be hamstrung by lack of transparent and inclusive governance. It is here that the UN must urge donor countries to consider the application reuse initiative as an alternative way of looking at building capacity of the state towards effective utilization of ODA.

With this I would like to thank the Chair and thank you all for your attention.

3 LINKAGES BETWEEN MR. AQUARO'S RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE ABOVE SPEECH AND MINISTERIAL DECLARATION FROM HIGH-LEVEL ECOSOC MEETING OF 3-5 JULY 2006

Links between Ministerial Declaration from High-Level ECOSOC Meeting of 3-5 July 2006 and Mr. Aquaro's Recommendations at the Informal Interactive General Assembly Hearings on the Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Decade 2001-2010:

o Mr. Aquaro's recognition of the importance of ICT applications in the development of LDCs' governance institutions, and specifically those institutions' advancement toward greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness is reflected broadly in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Ministerial Declaration. These paragraphs express the correlative relationship between ICTs, good governance, and the achievement of internationally set development goals, including the MDGs.

- **Paragraph 15**. We emphasize that good governance at the international level is fundamental for achieving sustainable development. In order to ensure a dynamic and enabling international economic environment, it is important to promote global economic governance through addressing the international finance, trade, technology and investment patterns that have an impact on the development prospects of developing countries. To this effect, the international community should take all necessary and appropriate measures, including ensuring support for structural and macroeconomic reform, a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem and increasing the market access of developing countries.

- **Paragraph 16**. We call upon all countries to promote good governance, which is essential for sustainable development, and reaffirm that sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of the people and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation, and that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, the rule of law, gender equality, market-oriented policies and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies are also essential and mutually reinforcing.

o Mr. Aquaro's acknowledgement that LDCs' use of ICTs to facilitate such marked improvement in public administration is inevitably impeded by a dearth of resources, and his resolve that developed countries, and particularly the private sector in such countries, need to assist developing countries in this regard are addressed in paragraphs 30, 24 and 27, respectively:

- **Paragraph 30.** We call for increased national investment and international development funding and investment flows to developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are targeted to sectors of the economy with greater potential to generate productive employment and decent work for all….

- **Paragraph 24**. We resolve to encourage greater direct investment, including foreign direct investment, in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to support their development activities and to enhance the benefits they can derive from such investments.

- **Paragraph 27**. We acknowledge the vital role the private sector can play in generating new investments, employment and financing for development.

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o Mr. Aquaro's recommendation that developing countries need to create an enabling environment to facilitate the technology transfer, as well as ensure compatibility and sustainability with regard to infrastructures, local industries, and human capital is echoed by paragraph 25. This paragraph evokes paragraphs 15 and 16, and reinforces the imperative faced by developing countries to build transparent, accountable, and responsive governance institutions.

- **Paragraph 25.** We further resolve to continue to support efforts by developing countries and countries with economies in transition to create a domestic environment conducive to attracting investments through, inter alia, achieving a transparent, stable and predictable investment climate with proper contract enforcement and respect for property rights and the rule of law and pursuing appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage business formation.

o Finally Mr. Aquaro's underlying premises—that developed countries should make available at no cost e governance technologies to developing countries, and that developing countries should pool their resources to develop and share with one another such technology—is pointedly expressed in paragraph 26:

- **Paragraph 26**. We commit ourselves to promoting and facilitating, as appropriate, access to and the development, transfer and diffusion of technologies, including environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how, to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.

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4 MR. AQUARO'S RESUMEE AND SOME INFORMATION ON ONE DOLLAR FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 MR. VINCENZO AQUARO

Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro is President and CEO of Formit Servizi S.p.A, a leading company in Italy in the independent monitoring and evaluation of markets and procurement of ICT contracts for Public Administration. As the first CEO of Formit Servizi since its startup over 5 years ago, Formit Servizi today supports Italian Public Administration to manage and monitor ICT contracts valued over one Billion EU Euro. Formit Servizi is a subsidiary company under full control of the Italian FORMIT Foundation Non Governmental Organization (NGO) in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Mr. Aquaro's technical cooperation activities with the United Nations include support to a United Nations Project titled, "One Dollar for Development" on capacity building and reuse of technology for the non G-8 member states. He is also the Vice President of "Give Them a Hand Foundation" (GTAH) - a not for profit organization based at UN-Headquarters in New York, which exists to serve others in need, independently and without discrimination. GTAH through its programmes, initiatives and partnerships works towards furthering the goals of the United Nations including the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (MDGs). The work of the organization is building public private partnerships and executing humanitarian and medical missions including other projects that focus on strengthening of human capital through capacity building programmes, especially in rural areas.

He also serves as ICT advisor of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and member of the Steering Committee for the re-organization of the ICT Division of the National Institute of Social Insurance (DCSIT- INAIL).

Mr. Aquaro, holds a Degree in Electronic Engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of Bari. His 17 years of work experience in progressive senior management includes his career stints at European Space Agency ESTEC in Netherlands, at EIS S.p.A., an ICT subsidiary company of Telecom/Finsiel S.p.A. and of EIS ICT advisor for a multi-regional NATO C3I Army program in charge of the Italian Ministry of Defense. In 1998 he founded Aquaro & Co. Consulting which supported industries and Public Administrations Operations in ICT projects

4.2 ONE DOLLAR FOR DEVELOPMENT

The underlying rationale behind this initiative is that sustainable MDG-based strategies of developing countries require significant public investments to spur local scientific

innovation and technological development. The G-8 countries have successfully developed and deployed several eGovernment applications to improve governance and boost their socio-economic development. Such applications are already in use in many key areas such as justice, security, healthcare, welfare, transport, and education. Without having to reinvest and at a fraction of the initial development costs, many of these applications could be easily duplicated, redeployed and put in use in developing countries to support local innovation and technological development, especially in the field of governance. The initiative aims at making available at no cost e-Government applications owned by developed countries to developing countries by encouraging North-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, which complements North-South cooperation, as an effective contribution to development and as a means to share and transfer good practices and technologies. The initiative urges donor countries and international organizations, including all those within the United Nations system, to strengthen their technical support to such activities.