

Declaration of Florianopolis

Bearing in mind decision 1999/281 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in which the Council resolved that the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000 should be devoted to the theme “Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy”,

Taking into consideration the fact that, in accordance with this decision, representatives of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have gathered at the Regional Meeting on Information Technology for Development, convened by the Government of the Federal Republic of Brazil in the City of Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil on 20-21 June 2000, in order to prepare, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in its capacity as secretariat, for their participation in the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 5 to 7 July 2000,

Taking into consideration also the shared aspirations of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to become full-fledged members of the information society by the year 2005 on an efficient, effective and sustainable basis within the framework of the global knowledge-based economy,

Considering that information and communications technologies constitute the central pillar for the construction of a global knowledge-based economy and society and that they therefore constitute the basis for a new form of organization and production at the world level that is redefining the way in which the countries position themselves within the world economic system as well as the relationships existing among individuals, culture, and the exercise of power and citizenship, and that knowledge will be an increasingly important determinant of competitiveness in the global economy,

Bearing in mind that allowing the evolution of the information and knowledge-based society to be guided solely by market mechanisms entails the risk of an amplification of the social gaps existing within our societies, the creation of new modes of exclusion, an increase in the negative aspects of globalization and a widening of the distances between developed and developing countries,

Cognizant of the great potential that such technologies have to further the social and political development of the countries of the region in such areas as education, health, job training, the eradication of social marginality, the consolidation of citizen participation, transparency in government action and the formation of more open, democratic societies,

Bearing in mind that during the past decade significant progress has been made in the region in correcting fiscal disequilibria, reducing inflation, increasing the pace of export

growth, pursuing regional integration processes, attracting foreign direct investment and resuming economic growth, which reached a rate of 3.2% for the region as a whole but which has continued to be insufficient to achieve a significant reduction in existing social and technological gaps; and that the economies of the region continue to register low savings and investment rates, sluggish job creation, pronounced structural heterogeneity and a high degree of external vulnerability and fragility in their financial systems;

Mindful of the fact that the challenges of development and of overcoming the poverty and social marginality that affect 36% of the population require sustained, ongoing economic growth which encompasses sectors that create productive jobs on a large scale and which permits increased, equitable access to all social services,

Considering that, if information technology is suited to our culture and if relevant content is created on an ongoing basis, then diversity can be enhanced and cultural identity reaffirmed,

The representatives of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Florianopolis, taking into account all the aforementioned considerations, hereby urge the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council to support the developing countries in their efforts to pursue the following courses of action:

1. Design and implement public programmes with a view to ensuring that the entire population has access to information and communications technology-related products and services as soon as possible, disseminating their use, promoting the growth of digital network infrastructure, and supporting research, innovation and technological development in general and at the level of individual business enterprises;

2. Create the necessary conditions and mechanisms for the universal provision of training to citizens in the use of new technologies and for the achievement of broader computer literacy by, in particular, fostering innovative initiatives in the areas of distance learning, non-formal education and teacher training as an essential basis for enabling the population to play a positive role in new forms of knowledge-based production, while also promoting the access and use of information and communications technologies in methodologies designed to accelerate the educational processes of marginalized population groups and those living in extreme poverty;

3. Provide opportunities for sensitization and training in information and communications technologies for political and community leaders, drawing upon the experience gained from programmes designed to promote the information society;

4. Develop such mechanisms and make such investments as may be necessary, in collaboration with the private sector, so that all locales in every country of the region will have community centres providing digital connectivity in order to overcome the marginalization of the population from access to services provided by the new economy, including, *inter alia*, electronic commerce, telemedicine and on-line administrative

procedures, by building up physical infrastructure and paving the way for broad access to digital networks;

5. Promote more efficient, effective and transparent government administration at all levels by offering on-line information to citizens, management oversight mechanisms, services, administrative procedures and government outsourcing of goods and services via digital networks;

6. Encourage the development of technology-based firms by creating such mechanisms as venture capital funds, technology incentive zones and business incubators with the participation of academic institutions, research centres and the private sector while also promoting their national, regional and international integration through the use of advanced research and development networks;

7. Develop regulatory systems that, in addition to protecting intellectual property rights, minimize the risks and uncertainties of the new environment generated by the new information and communications technologies through the provision of services that will ensure and lead to the swift expansion of electronic commerce by establishing competitive conditions and protecting the privacy and other interests of users, consumers and small-scale producers that engage in electronic commerce;

8. Actively seek out forms of financing and means of promoting corporate innovation and modernization, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, so that firms will have access to new business opportunities, thereby facilitating the creation of new and better employment opportunities;

9. Strengthen cultural and science and technology institutions so that they can take full advantage of information and communications technologies that will permit the generation and diffusion of diverse cultural contents of a regional, national or local nature via digital networks;

10. Promote research and societal ownership of advanced information and communications technologies and work for the establishment of high-speed networks in the region;

11. Adopt measures aimed at reducing the cost of communication services, promoting the development and consolidation of state-of-the-art national and regional communications infrastructure, upgrading the “capillarity” of information and communications networks within their various territorial units, substantially upgrading key functions such as applicability and interoperability, and facilitating a swifter diffusion of technological innovations;

12. Deploy cooperative regional efforts relating to public policies on information and communications technologies, to include consensus-based participation in relevant international forums concerned with, *inter alia*, electronic trade, security, the protection of

privacy and intellectual property rights, and public policies designed to forestall monopolistic practices;

13. Strengthen regional cooperation through the introduction of innovative mechanisms such as the promotion of joint technical/commercial ventures in the information and communications technology sector that will enhance the value of the region's productive potential and diversity through its integration into the new economy;

14. Promote the upgrading and reorganization of public- and private-sector communications infrastructure with a view to creating optimum conditions for interconnectivity and interoperability while ensuring sufficient capacity to meet the demands of two-way traffic;

15. Reinforce the creation of joint mechanisms for the development, consolidation and marketing of high-technology products and services, such as software development, distance education and others;

16. Promote the creation of a regional "observatory" to monitor the impact of information technologies on the economy and other related cooperative measures;

17. Promote the generation of reliable, standardized and up-to-date statistical information and indicators on the development of information and communications technologies in the region and its countries while promoting statistical-system coordination mechanisms;

18. Foster the development of local, national and regional content in the native and official languages of the countries of the region and the residence of that content on regional servers with a view to rationalizing access for local and regional traffic and promoting its exchange via the most direct routes;

19. Adopt measures that will permit a reduction to be made in the developing countries' external debts in exchange for funds that those countries will devote to their programmes for promoting economic and social development through the use of information and communications technologies;

20. Call upon the international community to provide technical and financial cooperation at both the multilateral and bilateral levels in facilitating the aforementioned internal efforts, and invite the relevant private firms in developed countries to join in this cooperative effort.