

**IV EUROPEAN UNION – LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
MINISTERIAL FORUM ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY An Alliance for
Social Cohesion through Digital Inclusion, Lisbon, 28-29 April of 2006**

LISBON DECLARATION

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The Ministers and Heads of Delegation of Latin American, the Caribbean and the European Union countries, and the member of the European Commission, present in the IV European Union (EU) – Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Ministerial Forum on Information Society, held 28-29 April of 2006 in Lisbon, Portugal:

- i. Recalling that this IV Forum is placed in the context of the preparation for the next Summit of the Heads of State and Government of EU-LAC, that will take place in Vienna (Austria) on 11 and 12 May 2006;
- ii. Emphasising that this IV Ministerial Forum consolidates the dialogue on Information Society between both regions, based on the previous meetings held in Seville in 2002, in Lima in 2003 and in Rio de Janeiro in 2004;
- iii. Stressing the recent elaboration of the Regional Action Plan eLAC2007 by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and its perspectives towards 2010 and beyond, as well as the adoption of the agenda i2010 by the countries of the European Union, and the large cooperation potential that is opened between these two regional agendas, and welcoming efforts by countries of both regions to align their national ICT development strategies with eLAC 2007 and i2010 respectively;
- iv. Agreeing that in the Geneva Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) indicates in its paragraph 62 that "Regional integration contributes to the development of the global Information Society and makes strong cooperation within and among regions indispensable", and that the Tunis Agenda emphasises in its paragraph 101 that "Upon request from governments, regional intergovernmental organizations in collaboration with other stakeholders should carry out WSIS implementation activities, exchanging information and best practices at the regional level, as well as facilitating policy debate on the use of ICT for development, with a focus on attaining the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals ";
- v. Taking into account the Tunis Agenda of the World Summit on the Information Society, in particular paragraphs 72 to 78, in which the Summit instruct "the UN Secretary-General, in an open and inclusive process, to convene, by the second quarter of 2006, a meeting of the new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue — called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)";
- vi. Taking also into account paragraphs 69 to 71 of the Tunis Agenda of the World Summit on the Information Society, in which it is recognized "the need for enhanced cooperation in

the future, to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities, in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, but not in the day-today technical and operational matters, that do not impact on international public policy issues”;

vii. Recognising that progress of the Information Society over recent years has been impressive, with significant advances in Internet use, broadband and mobile communications. Noting that nevertheless this process can be enhanced by removing barriers to universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to information. We underline the importance of removing barriers to bridging the digital divide, particularly those that hinder the full achievement of the economic, social and cultural development of countries and the welfare of their people, in particular, in developing countries;

viii. Recognising the on-going efforts in both regions to promote the development of an Information Society that look for human wellbeing, cohesion and social inclusion and economic, democratic and cultural development;

ix. Acknowledging the points of view of representatives of the public sector, civil society, academia, the private sector, the international organisations and other stakeholders participating in the IV Forum;

x. We recall the importance of creating a trustworthy, transparent and non-discriminatory, legal, regulatory and policy environment. To that end, we reiterate that ITU and other regional organizations should take steps to ensure rational, efficient and economic use of, and equitable access to, the radio-frequency spectrum by all countries, based on relevant international agreements;

xi. Reaffirming our satisfaction that the ten ambitious points of the Bi-Regional Programme for Digital Inclusion that has been agreed during the III Ministerial Forum LAC-EU in Rio de Janeiro in November 2004 have been implemented in both regions (see Annex).

In this context:

1. We reiterate our conviction that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are a powerful tool in the fight against poverty, inequalities and social and cultural exclusion, with a view to attaining the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to prevent any new form of social segregation, and that the full benefits of the Information Society will not be achieved while a digital divide persists between those who have and those who have not access to ICT and to the necessary training for their effective use. As agreed at the Tunis Agenda "National e-strategies, where appropriate, should be an integral part of national development plans, including Poverty Reduction Strategies, aiming to contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals;

2. We affirm that digital inclusion requires solidarity and partnership between the governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and the international organisations. Cooperation initiatives, both within national borders and between states and between

regions, should contribute to the establishment of a world digital solidarity agenda, which builds the basis for the development of the Information Society in less developed areas and regions;

3. We are convinced that a transparent and efficient government and public sector are an essential part and have a central role in the construction of the Information Society in both regions, and that the exchange of experiences in this area is of mutual benefit. We also recognise that ICT are effective tools to strengthen sustainable development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law;

4. We acknowledge the work carried out under the framework of the @LIS (Alliance for the Information Society) Programme of the European Commission on cooperation between the European Union and Latin America, emphasising its successful results until now. We consider that it is important to evaluate these activities and to obtain the relevant conclusions for the future regarding the contribution of ICT for the development and social cohesion in both regions. and in view of the next 5th Ministerial Forum, different options to sustain the results achieved should be sought; In particular, the evolution of best practices from the current pilot phases to a broader scale as well as the continuation and eventual extension to the Caribbean region of the RedCLARA, should be studied;

5. ICT should be fully mainstreamed into strategies for Official Development Assistance (ODA) through more effective information-sharing and coordination among development partners, and through analysis and sharing of best practices and lessons learned from experience with ICT for development programmes;

6. We welcome with satisfaction the effort put forward by the Secretary General of the United Nations to organize the first meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), in Athens, next October. We also reaffirm our conviction that the process towards an “Enhanced Cooperation Initiative on Internet Governance” shall deserve the full commitment of our Governments and we express our support to and offer our help for the United Nations Secretary General during the preparatory process aiming at the first meeting of this “Initiative”, in 2006;

7. We note that the i2010 initiative, which provides the framework for EU Information Society policy, identifies eInclusion (digital inclusion) as a priority, and therefore foresees actions on key areas, including accessibility, geographical digital divide, eGovernment and ageing. i2010 also announces a major European initiative on eInclusion for 2008. We welcome the EU Ministerial Conference on "ICT for an Inclusive Society" that will be held in Riga (Latvia) on 11-13 June 2006, which will aim at setting the EU policy agenda for the coming years, identifying conditions for implementation and committing all stakeholders;

8. We underline the importance of implementing the activities included in the Regional Action Plan eLAC2007 and its progress until now, which has had the technical cooperation of various regional organisations and networks, in particular ECLAC, OAS and INFOLAC, with a view to the prompt self evaluation of these efforts by the GRULAC countries in the event of eLAC2007 in El Salvador during 2007, as a step towards the fulfilment of the 2015 commitments defined by the World Summit on Information Society. We agree to

deepen cooperation among the two regions in order to create synergies between initiatives i2010 and eLAC2007 within the framework of the bi-regional working programmes of this Forum which are framed in the WSIS documents and keeping in mind current or new programmes such as the @LIS and the EU seventh framework programme for research, among others;

9. We affirm our interest to continue and intensify the dialogue between i2010 and eLAC2007, including the exchange of experiences, the promotion of research, the development of joint initiatives and the participation of experts and policymakers in events, initiatives and research projects in both regions;

10. We express our willingness to intensify our dialogue on the development of foresight studies, aiming at the creation of future common visions for the development of the Information Society, involving the public sector, civil society, academia, private sector and users of both regions;

11. We welcome the agreements reached during the IV Summit of Presidents of the telecommunications regulatory authorities in Latin America (Regulatel) and Europe (IRG), held in November 2005 in Sintra, Portugal;

12. We reaffirm our support to the dialogue on standards between public and private entities in both regions, aimed at fostering the development of open international standards, in all aspects linked to infrastructures, services, applications, security and interoperability;

13. We acknowledge the progress made in the interconnection among the Latin American (redCLARA) and European (GEANT) networks, which provides a solid basis for scientific bi-regional cooperation, contributing to achieve the objectives adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society of Tunis. In this regard, we want to bring to the attention of the Heads of State and Government the importance of maintaining the political and financial support to initiatives that consolidate the ICT based scientific collaboration space, such as redCLARA and its interconnection with GEANT, to guarantee its continued operation and bring an extension to the Caribbean region. We express our support to the strengthening of EU-LAC research & development cooperation, notably in the context of Seventh EU Framework Programme for research, which will cover the period 2007-2013, based on common priorities jointly identified and building on the potential extension of the interconnection between redCLARA and GEANT;

14. At the same time, we emphasise the significance of physical infrastructure projects, such as the Puebla-Panama Plan and the Initiative for the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure, in encouraging the participation of multilateral financial organisations and private investors;

15. We express our satisfaction with the development of the RELPE Network (Red Latinoamericana de Portales Educativos), that promotes the sharing and production of educational resources through their portals, taking into account every country choices in terms of platforms, content, and curricula. We welcome the agreements reached between

the LAC Ministers of Education and express our interest to intensify further collaboration between LAC and European networks;

16. We favour the creation of laboratories and national centers specialized in e-health issues and the implementation of regional actions that aim at the adoption and promotion of standards for ICT use in health services. We also favour the promotion of the development of the required telecommunications infrastructure for medical services and e-health initiatives to improve primary care services, especially those in rural areas. We support the promotion the establishment of indicators that permit the objective evaluation of telemedicine programs and services in the region;

17. We express our interest to establish adequate measures to prevent and to correct if necessary the environmental impact of ICT products and their use during their manufacturing life, recuperation, recycling and disposal, notably taking into account the recommendations made by relevant intergovernmental organisations;

18. We note that the potential scope of eInclusion policy is broad; beyond the extension of Internet use, amongst other, it relates to a range of social as well as economic issues around the organisation and delivery of services of public interest, concerning various population groups, geographical areas, and small and medium-sized enterprises. We recognise that it will be important to deal with a number of key aspects in this regard, notably:

a) Provide strategic guidance, support and leadership, by: i) national and local eInclusion strategies, building on existing initiatives, orientations from regional and international organisations, and on feedback from target beneficiaries; ii) monitoring progress towards key targets through indicators and analysis, with common approaches enabling comparability and good practice exchange;

b) Reduce disparities on ICT access and use, including geographic disparities in disadvantaged areas, by: i) increasing the number of accessible Internet access points and awareness of key public locations with equitable geographic distributions; ii) providing promotional, incentive or support schemes for ICT terminal equipment and assistance, especially for disadvantaged people and areas; iii) ensuring an adequate role of the public sector on the development of ICT infrastructures;

c) Enhance ICT accessibility and usability, by: i) stimulating voluntary industry commitments and dialogue with users to promote usability, design for all mainstreaming and professional training; ii) stimulating compliance with relevant accessibility standards for communication networks, equipments and public web sites;

d) Improve digital literacy and competences, by: i) raising awareness of ICT-enabled benefits and digital literacy, notably for unemployed and other disadvantaged users, including training and assistance schemes; ii) ensuring that students and their teachers acquire basic digital competences, and enjoy affordable ICT access and assistance, building upon private sector efforts and accelerating progress by encouraging private-public partnerships;

e) Enhance security and user confidence, by: i) addressing ICT security issues; ii) addressing personal data protection and privacy issues that threaten ICT users, while improving their awareness and preparedness to self-address such threats;

f) Promote inclusive public interest services, notably eGovernment services by: i) designing and delivering key services and public service policies for target beneficiaries in a user-centric and inclusive way; ii) implementing joined-up government delivery approaches with a view to increasing e-enabled public service use, and as possible full e-government transactions; iii) protecting consumers and public service users' rights in the digital environment; iv) facilitating citizen interaction with administrations and participation in public affairs and democratic processes;

g) Promote, among others, e-commerce, e-health and e-education services and applications, to be carried out by private and public sector, as well as civil society, by: i) encouraging applications and services centered in users; ii) supporting strategies to encourage the wide use of these initiatives;

h) Address the needs of groups at risk of exclusion, by: i) providing relevant public and private sectors content and services to older people and those not benefiting from ICT, particularly to improve their capabilities and opportunities of access to decent work; ii) exploiting ICT possibilities for improving the number of women with qualifications and their presence to the workplace, including in management positions;

i) Promote cultural diversity, by: i) supporting pluralism, cultural and linguistic identity and diversity in the digital space, wide access to information and cultural heritage, as well as cultural and intellectual exchange; ii) fighting discrimination of immigrants, ethnic and cultural minorities, by stimulating their participation in the Information Society and taking into account human rights; iii) encouraging artistic and intellectual creativity in the Information Society, as well as entrepreneurship and business opportunities, in particular for minorities and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities; iv) supporting access of indigenous people to ICT, while preserving their legacy and cultural heritage so they can benefit for their own development; v) promoting the generation of content that reflect the regional identities in order to strengthen integration;

j) Reinforce international co-operation, by: i) stimulating joint research and support to demonstration and deployment; ii) undertaking actions to promote eInclusion on both the regional and cross-regional level, as well as on the international scene; iii) collaborating with international organisations dealing with eInclusion and the digital divide, notably in the context of the follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society; iv) working towards common international priorities and approaches.

19. We are grateful to the Portuguese Government and to the UMIC – Knowledge Society Agency –for the hospitality and their support to the realisation of this IV European Union – Latin America and Caribbean Ministerial Forum on Information Society. We thank as well to the European Commission, to ECLAC and AHCET for the support provided, and look forward to meet in the V European Union – Latin America and Caribbean Ministerial Forum on Information Society.