

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE
FOR I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT (G.A.I.D.), AT MARRIOT
HOTEL, PUTRAJAYA
19 JUNE 2006**

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH, PEACE BE UPON YOU,
AND GOOD AFTERNOON

THE HONOURABLE DATO' SRI DR. JAMALUDIN MOHD JARJIS
MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, MALAYSIA

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. MARK MALLOCH BROWN
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS

EXCELLENCIES, AMBASSADORS AND HIGH COMMISSIONERS

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. IT IS AN HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO ADDRESS THIS INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE "GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT" (G.A.I.D.). ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA, I AM PLEASED TO WELCOME ALL OF YOU, PARTICULARLY OUR FOREIGN DIGNITARIES AND GUESTS, TO PUTRAJAYA. I UNDERSTAND THAT OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS, YOU WILL BE MEETING ON A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO US ALL – CHARTING OUT A LARGER, MORE MEANINGFUL ROLE FOR I.C.T. IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. . I SEE THIS MEETING AS BOTH CRITICAL AND TIMELY. WHILE THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF THE POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT OF I.C.T., QUESTIONS REMAIN AS TO HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT I.C.T. CAN BE APPLIED TOWARDS ACHIEVING SOCIAL GOALS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS GATHERING OF THE BEST MINDS IN THE AREAS OF I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A CLEAR VISION AND STRONG LEADERSHIP FOR GLOBAL I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

2. WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY FOR A COMMON CAUSE, MOTIVATED BY A VISION OF A TRULY UNITED AND DEVELOPED GLOBAL COMMUNITY BROUGHT TOGETHER THROUGH THE POWER OF I.C.T.. A VISION WHERE EVERY NATION, EVERY SOCIETY AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS A PARTICIPANT IN A DEVELOPMENT PROCESS THAT IS PEOPLE-CENTRED, PEOPLE-ORIENTED AND PEOPLE-DRIVEN.

THIS IS A TRULY NOBLE AND WORTHY VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT; A VISION THAT IS PROMOTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS; AND A VISION THAT WE MUST ALL KEEP WORKING TOWARDS, DESPITE THE MANY OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES THAT WE MAY FACE ALONG THE WAY.

3. I AM HEARTENED TO NOTE THE THEME FOR THE INAUGURAL GLOBAL ALLIANCE MEETING — THAT IS, “ADVANCING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH I.C.T. AND INNOVATION: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK”. THE ADOPTION OF THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION AT THE U.N. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT IN SEPTEMBER 2000 WAS INDEED A DEFINING MOMENT FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE DECLARATION MARKED A SHIFT IN THE PARADIGM THAT GOVERNS RELATIONS AMONG COUNTRIES – FROM ONE EMPHASISING COMPETITION FOR THE WORLD’S RESOURCES, TO ONE THAT PLACES A HIGH PREMIUM ON COOPERATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PEOPLES.

4. THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MADE A STRONG COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHT FOR DEVELOPMENT, TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, TO THE ERADICATION OF THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY, AS WELL AS TO SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. TOWARDS THIS END, THE SIGNATORIES OF THE DECLARATION COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO A SERIES OF TARGETS, MOST OF WHICH ARE TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2015. THESE TARGETS ARE OF COURSE CONTAINED IN THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (M.D.G.’S).

5. AS WE MOVE NEARER TO THE DEADLINE, THE URGENCY TO FOCUS ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES TOWARD ACHIEVING THE M.D.G.’S AS WELL AS OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES BECOMES MORE ACUTE. TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR EFFORTS, MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE – NEW APPROACHES MUST BE EMPLOYED, NEW DEVELOPMENT TOOLS UTILISED AND NEW DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS BROUGHT IN. INDEED, GOVERNMENTS BY THEMSELVES CANNOT ACHIEVE THEIR DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES WITHOUT THE SUPPORT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT THEY SERVE.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT IS HIGHLY APPROPRIATE THAT THIS FIRST MEETING OF THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOCUSES ON FORMULATING A FRAMEWORK AND GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR INCREASING THE ROLE OF I.C.T. AND INNOVATION IN THE PROCESS TO ADVANCE THE M.D.G.’S. THE MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER APPROACH ADOPTED BY THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE ENSURES THAT ALL RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS ARE CONSULTED AT THE OUTSET, AND THAT THE NEEDS OF UNDER-DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES ARE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

7. I ADDRESS YOU TODAY NOT ONLY AS A LEADER OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY THAT IS ON THE CUSP OF TRANSFORMING ITSELF INTO A FULLY-DEVELOPED NATION. I SPEAK TO YOU ALSO AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN), THE NON-ALLIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) AND

THE ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (O.I.C.). MEMBERSHIP OF THESE THREE ORGANISATIONS IS PRIMARILY MADE UP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. FROM MY UNIQUE VANTAGE POINT, I AM ABLE TO SEE A NUMBER OF PRESSING ISSUES THAT FACE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES; MANY OF WHICH RELATE TO ACCESS TO I.C.T. AS A MEANS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT. THESE ISSUES INCLUDE WIDER ACCESS TO AND IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE AND HOUSING IN THE COUNTRY, AS WELL AS THE PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES, AMONG OTHERS.

8. BUT FOR MANY UNDER-DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, POVERTY REMAINS THE SINGLE MOST FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED. ONCE POVERTY CAN BE EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED, OTHER DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES BECOME EASIER TO ACHIEVE. AS THE EXPERIENCE OF SOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – INCLUDING MALAYSIA – HAVE SHOWN, I.C.T. AND INNOVATION CAN PLAY A SIGNIFICANT AND MEANINGFUL ROLE IN HELPING GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES TO CREATE WEALTH AND SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH. INDEED, WITH KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION REPLACING LAND, LABOUR AND CAPITAL AS THE KEY DRIVERS OF WEALTH CREATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH TODAY, THE FAILURE OF A COUNTRY TO EMBRACE I.C.T. AND INNOVATION MAY LEAD TO ITS STAGNATION, OR EVEN ITS EVENTUAL DECLINE.

9. WHILE THE IMPERATIVE TO EMBRACE I.C.T. AND INNOVATION IS CLEAR, NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO BE OVERCOME BEFORE I.C.T. AND INNOVATION CAN BE FULLY UTILISED BY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO SPUR DEVELOPMENT. IT IS A SAD FACT THAT THOSE WHO WOULD ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF I.C.T. THE MOST, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE THE LEAST ACCESS TO IT.

10. I FOR ONE AM DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT ALTHOUGH WE LIVE IN A TIME OF ADVANCED AND SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGIES THAT CAN PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS, THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY NATIONS TOO POOR TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE DEVELOPMENT TOOLS TO ADVANCE THEMSELVES. COMPARED TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, FOR EXAMPLE, LEVELS OF ACCESS TO THE INTERNET AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES REMAIN LOW. STATISTICS SHOW THAT THE AVERAGE INTERNET PENETRATION RATE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WAS TEN TIMES AS HIGH AS THAT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AT THE START OF THIS CENTURY, AND HAS CONTINUED TO WIDEN – NOT NARROW – SINCE THEN.

11. EVEN IF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES COULD AFFORD THE HIGH INFRASTRUCTURAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INTERNET AND OTHER FORMS OF I.C.T., OUR PEOPLES ARE HAMPERED BY OTHER BARRIERS SUCH AS A LACK OF RELEVANT CONTENT, POOR TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DOMINANCE OF THE INTERNET. STUDIES SUGGEST THAT ABOUT 90 PER CENT OF THE INTERNET IS IN ENGLISH, YET ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION UNDERSTAND THIS LANGUAGE.

12. THIS ALL POINTS TO THE EXISTENCE OF A "DIGITAL DIVIDE", A TERM THAT DESCRIBES THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE ACCESS TO AND POSSESS THE SKILLS TO USE I.C.T. AND THOSE WHO HAVE LIMITED OR NO ACCESS. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE REFLECTS THE BROADER PROBLEM OF INEQUALITIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN AND WITHIN COUNTRIES. I WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IS THE NEW POVERTY OF OUR ERA, AND THEREFORE A CRITICAL CONCERN THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

13. THIS BRINGS ME BACK TO WHAT I BELIEVE IS THE KEY VALUE THAT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCOURSE ON I.C.T. AND INNOVATION AND THEIR ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. I BEGAN MY SPEECH BY RAISING THE QUESTION OF HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT I.C.T. CAN BE APPLIED TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL GOALS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. I BELIEVE THAT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE IS WELL PLACED TO ANSWER THESE AND MANY OTHER RELATED QUESTIONS. THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE, BEING A MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM, HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF BRINGING TOGETHER A RANGE OF EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE SECTOR, AS WELL AS CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS. THE PARTICIPATION OF GRASSROOTS GROUPS ALSO ENSURES THAT SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGY NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES ARE MET AND THAT INITIATIVES CAN BE IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY INTRODUCED AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL. MOREOVER, I BELIEVE THAT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE CAN, BY VIRTUE OF SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS, CONSOLIDATE THE SCATTERED EFFORTS AND ISOLATED OUTCOMES OF MANY ORGANISATIONS TO PRODUCE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE RESULTS.

14. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – WHILE CONTINUING TO ENGAGE THE SUPPORT OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES – SHOULD ALSO LOOK AT INCREASING COOPERATION BETWEEN THEMSELVES. THEREFORE, I ENCOURAGE GLOBAL ALLIANCE MEMBERS TO START IDENTIFYING PARTICULAR PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED TOGETHER WITH OTHER COUNTRIES TO ADVANCE I.C.T. AND INNOVATION. PROGRAMMES SUCH AS A CYBER PEACE CORPS TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN DIGITAL LITERACY FOR THOSE NATIONS IN NEED, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GLOBAL VIRTUAL RESOURCE CENTRE, ARE SOME OF THE POSSIBILITIES THAT DESERVE CONSIDERATION.

15. IN ADDITION, I CALL UPON THIS MEETING TO GIVE ITS SUPPORT TO MALAYSIA'S MOVE TO ESTABLISH AND HOST THE WORLD'S FIRST TRULY INTERNATIONAL, PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTION AGAINST CYBER-TERRORISM, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "INTERNATIONAL MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIP AGAINST CYBER-TERRORISM" OR "IMPACT". IN ESTABLISHING "IMPACT", MALAYSIA HOPES TO CREATE A PIONEER PLATFORM TO ALLOW GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD TO EXCHANGE NOTES AND IDEAS, AS WELL AS TO FACILITATE THE SHARING OF SKILLS AND BEST PRACTICES, WITH THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF COMBATING THE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING THREATS IN CYBERSPACE. OUR DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS WILL COME TO NAUGHT IF WE DO NOT FIRMLY AND

SWIFTLY MOVE TO COUNTER CYBER-TERRORISM. INDEED, IMPACT IS MODELED MUCH IN THE SAME VEIN AS THIS GLOBAL ALLIANCE AND LENDS ITSELF TO EASY SUPPORT AND COOPERATION FROM MEMBERS OF THIS MEETING.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

16. MALAYSIA'S KEY DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS REFLECT THE GENERAL CONCERNS OF ALL COUNTRIES ASPIRING TOWARDS DEVELOPED STATUS. MOREOVER, AS AN EARLY ADOPTER AND STRONG PROPONENT OF I.C.T. FOR DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS A COUNTRY THAT HAS ACHIEVED ALL BUT ONE OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, I BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE CAN PERHAPS PROVIDE IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. AS SUCH, ALLOW ME TO HUMBLY SHARE WITH YOU MY COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO I.C.T..

17. FOR THE PAST 35 YEARS, MALAYSIA'S DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN BASED ON A PHILOSOPHY OF EQUITABLE GROWTH. OUR MODEL, WHICH ADDRESSES BOTH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT, HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MAINTAINING BALANCED DEVELOPMENT. ECONOMIC GROWTH HAS BEEN VIGOROUSLY PURSUED, WHILE SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES CONSTRUCTIVELY MANAGED AND POVERTY LEVELS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED.

18. BUILDING ON THIS STRONG BASE, WE ANNOUNCED OUR "VISION 2020" DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IN 1991, WHICH IS A FRAMEWORK TO TRANSFORM THE NATION TO BECOME A FULLY DEVELOPED COUNTRY BY 2020. TO MIGRATE TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY, THE NATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGENDA (NITA) WAS FORMULATED IN 1995. IT PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE INFORMATION AGE. THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF THE NITA ARE SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT, WHEREBY I.C.T. IS RECOGNISED AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS A MAJOR DRIVER OF CHANGE.

19. THE NATIONAL I.T. COUNCIL (N.I.T.C.) WAS ESTABLISHED TO DRIVE THE AGENDA AND WAS OPERATED BASED ON A TRI-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL COMPRISING OF THE GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE SECTOR AND COMMUNITY GROUPS. MANY I.C.T.-BASED SOCIAL PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WERE UNDERTAKEN AS A RESULT. THESE PROJECTS FEATURE THE KIND OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT FROM THE PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND COMMUNITY INTEREST SECTORS THAT ARE BEING PROMOTED BY THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT SOME OF THE PROJECTS THAT WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED — WHICH ARE SHOWCASED IN THE EXHIBITION OUTSIDE — HAVE GONE A LONG WAY IN IMPROVING THE BASIC LIVES OF THE TARGET COMMUNITIES. AMONG OTHERS, OUR ICT-BASED COMMUNITY PROJECTS HAVE CONNECTED REMOTE COMMUNITIES TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, AND BROUGHT TO THE MAINSTREAM, DISADVANTAGED GROUPS SUCH AS THE DEAF, SENIOR CITIZENS, THE YOUTH AND WOMEN.

20. AS MANY OF YOU ARE AWARE, THE MULTIMEDIA SUPER CORRIDOR OR "M.S.C. MALAYSIA" AS IT IS NOW KNOWN, HAS ALSO BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING THE I.C.T. INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA, AS WELL AS IN SPEARHEADING MALAYSIA'S TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY. SINCE ITS CREATION 10 YEARS AGO, "M.S.C. MALAYSIA" HAS ATTRACTED OVER 1,400 COMPANIES, INCLUDING 70 MULTINATIONAL AND GLOBAL BRANDS, TO INVEST . M.S.C. MALAYSIA IS GLOBALLY KNOWN AS A LEADING SHARED SERVICES AND OUTSOURCING HUB, WITH PLANS TO BECOME A HUB FOR DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA CONTENT IN THE FUTURE. BESIDES THIS, MANY APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE BENEFITED THE PEOPLE, SUCH AS THE CONVENIENT NATIONAL SMARTCARD (CALLED THE MYKAD), E-GOVERNMENT AND TELE-HEALTH APLPLICATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN RESEARCHED AND DEVELOPED OUT OF "M.S.C. MALAYSIA".

21. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CALL UPON ALL FELLOW DEVELOPING ECONOMIES TO LOOK AT R&D AND INNOVATION AS A WAY TO MOVE OUR ECONOMIES UP THE VALUE CHAIN AND SPREAD DEVELOPMENT ACROSS SOCIETY. ADAPTING CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY AND LOCALISING THEM TO SUIT SPECIFIC COMMUNITY NEEDS IS A GOOD STARTING POINT. I AM CONFIDENT THAT SUCH EFFORTS CAN HELP BRIDGE THE TECHNOLOGY DIVIDE BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND ENSURE MORE SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

22. THE 9TH MALAYSIA PLAN, WHICH IS THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF 5-YEAR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR MALAYSIA, REITIRATES THE COUNTRY'S COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT, WITH I.C.T. AS A KEY DRIVER. THE PLAN ALSO REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE PLACED ON HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION TO ENSURE THAT I.C.T. AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES CAN BE UTILISED BY THE PEOPLE FOR MAXIMUM BENEFIT. UNDER THE PLAN, MUCH EMPHASIS IS ALSO GIVEN TO THE PROVISION OF TRAINING AND THE APPROPRIATE SKILLS THROUGH EDUCATION AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

23. MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE MANY COUNTRY EXPERIENCES THAT GLOBAL ALLIANCE MEMBERS CAN SHARE IN. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT ONE SOLUTION MAY NOT NECESSARILY WORK FOR ALL. ULTIMATELY, EACH COUNTRY WILL NEED TO ADOPT SPECIFIC MEASURES AND TECHNOLOGIES THAT ARE BEST SUITED TO ITS OWN NEEDS, PRIORITIES, CULTURE, CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT. PERHAPS THE THING TO NOTE, THAT IS MOST ENCOURAGING TO US ALL, IS THAT BASED ON THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE, THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS CAN LARGELY BE ACHIEVED.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

24. MALAYSIA REMAINS COMMITTED TO PURSUING A DEVELOPMENT AGENDA THAT IS PROGRESSIVE, TECHNOLOGY-BASED, GROWTH-ORIENTED, AND YET EQUITABLE. WE ALWAYS WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE OUR DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS WITH OTHERS, AND TO LEARN FROM OUR FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD. THEREFORE, ALLOW ME TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE YOU BACK TO MALAYSIA IN 2008 WHEN MALAYSIA PLAYS HOST TO THE WORLD CONGRESS ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (W.C.I.T.). AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, W.C.I.T. IS THE WORLD'S PREMIER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS FORUM THAT BRINGS TOGETHER HEADS OF LEADING BUSINESSES AND MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS, I.T. POLICY-MAKERS, TECHNOLOGISTS AND ACADEMICS TO DISCUSS NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF I.T..

25. I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT "W.C.I.T. 2006", HELD EARLIER THIS YEAR IN AUSTIN TEXAS – WHICH I HAD THE PLEASURE TO ADDRESS – DISCUSSED FOR THE FIRST TIME THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OF I.C.T. ON SOCIETY IN A FEW KEY AREAS. WE WELCOME THIS DEVELOPMENT AND HOPE TO CONTINUE TO BROADEN THIS DISCUSSION AT "W.C.I.T. 2008" IN MALAYSIA. IT IS MY HOPE THAT ALL OF YOU WILL JOIN US AGAIN IN MALAYSIA IN 2008 TO CONTINUE THIS CRITICAL CONVERSATION ON TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT.

26. WITH THAT, I WOULD LIKE TO END BY EXPRESSING MALAYSIA'S APPRECIATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS FOR GIVING MALAYSIA THE HONOUR TO HOST THIS INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE ON I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT. TO ALL PARTICIPANTS, I WISH YOU THE BEST IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS AND BEYOND. THE EXPERIENCES SHARED AND DECISIONS TAKEN HERE WILL GO ALONG WAY TOWARD HELPING THOSE IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES – WHO ARE GRAPPLING WITH MANY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES – TO CATCH UP WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD, USING I.C.T. AS A TOOL. THEREFORE, I URGE ALL OF YOU TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS, TO ENSURE A MORE POSITIVE OUTCOME OF THIS MEETING, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL. TOGETHER WE CAN ACHIEVE THAT MUCH MORE IN ADVANCING I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT TO ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

THANK YOU.