MALAWI

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. CHARLES MSOSA

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI TO

THE UNITED NATIONS

AGENDA ITEM 16: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

TECHNOLOGIES

NEW YORK

Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

Malawi aligns herself with the statement made by the distinguished Representatives of Fiji and Ethiopia on behalf of the G-77 and China, and the African Group, respectively.

Let me also thank the Secretary General for his detailed report on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. The report recognizes progress that African countries have registered in enhancing Information and Communication Technologies, as well as challenges they still face in realizing their ICT compatible societies.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to make a few remarks in my national capacity. Malawi recognizes that ICT has increasingly become one of the dominant factors affecting every facet of development. It is in this vein that ICT is one of the few selected key pillars that forms Malawi’s Economic Recovery Plan, which is a Government blueprint aimed at kick starting Malawi’s economic development. To complement this, Malawi has an ICT policy that provides a framework for the deployment, exploitation and development of ICT to support the process of her accelerated socio-economic development.

ICT advances, coupled with a liberalized Malawi’s telecommunications industry have brought about changes in the way business is conducted. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report of 2011 indicates that use of Internet by the population in Malawi improved from the low levels of 0.07 percent in 2005 to 17 percent in 2011. Use of mobile and fixed telephones has improved from 2.63 percent to about 27 percent in the same period. This is largely due to the increase in the use of mobile telephones.
As the Secretary General’s report has noted, convergence has diversified products that people are enjoying from their mobile phones. A mobile phone is more than a medium of talking to a person on the other end of the line.

In addition to accessing social media sites, farmers in rural areas use the same mobile phones to access Agricultural Commodity Exchanges in search of produce markets that are offering competitive prices.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary General’s report rightly notes that African countries have continued to make progress in access to ICTs and their application in development. Government of Malawi, in collaboration with development partners, has so far provided a total of 36 tele-centres that are currently operating in rural areas, providing to the general public such services like internet, telephone, fax, printing, library and photocopying at a very small fee.

Despite this encouraging development, Malawi is still working on improving infrastructure that is capable of supporting this objective. As of 2012, there was a total of slightly two thousand kilometres of fiber optic cable laid in the country, most of it concentrated in urban areas. Government is also implementing a Regional Communication Infrastructure Program (Malawi Project RCIP-MW) whose overall aim is to improve the quality, availability and affordability of broadband within Malawi for both public and private users. Another component of the project is providing internet connection to public institutions and has so far been a success, more especially with secondary schools.

My delegation would like, therefore to thank the World Bank and the International Telecommunications Union-ITU for their financial and technical support towards this achievement. It is our hope that this cooperation will
continue as we strive to increase internet penetration levels and be in line with Government’s objective of making ICT a catalyst for national development.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, ICTs are critical enablers of economic development and investment, with consequential benefits for employment and social welfare. It is also a fact that globalization is here to stay and the developing countries could only be integral players if they have reliable ICT infrastructure. Malawi therefore calls upon relevant UN agencies to play their rightful role to coordinate initiatives from international organizations and development partners in order to bridge the digital divide. A well informed populace is critical to full realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I thank you all for your attention.