STATEMENT BY

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TO

THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

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Mr Chair

South Africa aligns itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Fiji on behalf of G77 and China, as well as Ethiopia on behalf of the African Group.

My Delegation would also like to thank the UN Secretariat for preparing the report on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the regional and international levels.

ICTs are recognized as key drivers of economic growth, of innovation and for the future of efficient energy use, the efficient provision of government services, of health services, education and many more beneficial services. The WSIS focused on ICTs as an enabler to create a people centred, development oriented, inclusive Information Society. However, one of the key outcomes of the WSIS, in the area of Internet Governance, has still not been attended to.

Mr Chair

We are now facing a situation where the internet is increasingly dominated and controlled by powerful vested interests, and by extension, as the Internet grows in importance in our daily lives, the majority of the world’s populations are dominated by such interest groups. However the Tunis Agenda of 2005 envisaged a process that will lead to the establishment of structures that will address the role of government in Internet Governance, in line with the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

South Africa believes that the internet should be treated as a global resource and managed in a fair and transparent manner, in accordance with the WSIS principles. It is important to protect the internet from domination by any particular national or private interest groups, both for current and future users. Africa has the youngest population and a high level of internet growth, in line with investments fuelling the growth in Broadband and mobile telephony and in line with the economic growth of the continent. The internet is important for the development of the continent and is where many of the internet’s future users and innovators reside.

Mr Chair

The Tunis Agenda sets out the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders with respect to enhanced cooperation and the management of the internet. It is necessary for all stakeholders to participate, noting their different responsibilities. Furthermore, the Tunis Agenda identifies the need to address globally applicable principles on public policy with respect to the coordination and management of critical internet resources. My delegation supports calls upon the organizations responsible for essential tasks associated with the internet to contribute to
creating an environment that facilitates this development of public policy principles.

Mr Chair

It is important to address enhanced cooperation in line with the WSIS outcomes, so that we can ensure that the internet remains part of what we envisaged. At Tunis we were focused on how the Internet can change peoples' lives for the better, through innovation, inclusiveness, and creating networks for sharing and disseminating ideas and knowledge. My delegation is concerned that we are now increasingly dominated by the interests of major corporations that may even try and usurp the cultural heritage of the peoples of developing countries by bidding for the ownership of such domain names on the internet.

Mr Chair

It is important to develop a structure that ensures inclusiveness, accountability and transparency for the development of public policy relating to the internet. This has to be done in accordance with the principles of international law. All UN Member States should be equally involved in the development of public policy, in line with UN principles. All countries need an equal say in public policy, and need to be able to ensure that the future of the internet is safeguarded so that it serves the needs of all countries and peoples.

Further to this, enhanced cooperation can lead to the development of a legitimate international framework, that will ensure that public policy principles are implemented to safeguard the future of the internet for all stakeholders, and ensure the participation of representatives of all stakeholders in line with their respective roles and responsibilities. Engagement with stakeholders is a public policy issue that should be undertaken in line with the WSIS principles, so that measures are put in place to ensure the inclusion of representatives of all stakeholders, not just those stakeholders with considerable resources and power.

In conclusion Mr Chair, my delegation proposes that there is a need for either an existing UN agency, or a new UN agency, to take on the responsibility of the coordination of an inclusive intergovernmental process in line with UN principles and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. This body would need to develop international public policy with respect to the internet, and have oversight over critical internet resources and infrastructure. This body would have to also have a clearly defined process for the structured engagement of all stakeholders to inform and contribute to the development of public policy. It would also have to develop structured relationships with existing bodies involved in the management of the internet, so that there is accountability at the policy level.

I thank you.