

World Summit on the Information Society

Geneva, 10 – 12 December 2003

Introduction

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured and humbled to be here today, to express on behalf of the Premier, the Government and the people of Niue Island, our appreciation for the invitation to be part of this important World Summit on the Information Society, to share ideas and experiences with regards to the windows of opportunities that ICT has and could offer in assisting each country and government with regards to improving the standards of living in our countries.

Global ICT Situation

The *digital divide* is very real and if our leaders and government are serious about their countries social, economical, cultural and demographic development, then ICT must be placed at the top of its priority list of developments at the same time be proactive and be committed to the formulation and execution of ICT policies.

Today, there are countries which have yet to realize and experience the meaning of having plain old telephones in the villages whilst in the meantime, developing countries are significantly advancing in new technology, with multiples of e-services being offered via the various medium of communications, especially the Internet. Island governments are today placed under pressure not only to provide universal telephone and Internet services, but for governments to provide these services at subsidized costs.

Niue ICT Situation

The government of Niue is committed to ICT development. It recognizes the importance of ICT for its social and economical development. Government has seen the significance impact ICT has contributed to two important fundamentals in Niue: Education and Health.

The Government recognizes that a healthy and educated nation will become the solid foundation for a successful future for Niue.

ICT is also an important tool the development of other key industries such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, trade, as well as good governance and improving efficiencies in both public and private sector services.

I am appreciative to say that with the technical and financial assistance provided by UNDP through the ICT4D project and UNESCO, Niue is today establishing ICT Learning Centres in every village. These Learning Centres will enabled both Niue's young and mature population to learn ICT applications, providing a medium not only for global communication but providing opportunities for e-trade at village levels.

Universal Services

The Government of Niue is obligated and committed to the delivery of universal ICT services, however this obligation and commitment comes at very

high costs. Satellite bandwidth costs is very high and Niue is fully dependent on fossil fuel for the generation of electricity.

Delivering and maintaining of ICT infrastructure and services such as telecommunication, broadcasting, civil aviation, maritime communications etc, is *very high* when considering a population of less than 2000 people. Niue has successfully achieved its universal telephone services policy through government subsidy. This commitment is also expected for the delivery of universal Internet services in future.

Management of Sovereign Assets

It is encouraging and welcoming to see that a very significant and fundamental component to small island countries such as Niue has been included in the Plan of Action and the Declaration of Principles: ***that Governments are encouraged to manage their respective country code top level domain name (ccTLD)***. The Government of Niue strongly supports this principle for very important and valid reasons. The Government and people of Niue firmly believes that the domain name .nu belongs to the country and people of Niue and it should be managed by Niue.

The Government of Niue is currently seeking re-delegation of the management of its ccTLD .nu domain. This very drastic action has been taken because the current manager have not co-operated with the government at all, with respect to repeated requests for the accountability and transparency of the management of the domain name.

IUSN, a US registered and incorporated non-profit organisation has assigned the .nu domain name to a company .NU Domain Limited, also US registered, to market and sell the .nu registrations. There has been no accountability of the revenue generated by this company nor any transparency.

The government of Niue has made every effort to seek accommodation with IUSN and .NU Domain Ltd principals but to no avail. The Government of Niue has therefore taken the drastic step of appointing a commission of inquiry to investigate the circumstances in which an agreement was entered into by the former government and IUSN.

The re-delegation request has been presented to ICANN and the US Department of Commerce, who has advised that every effort should be made to resolve these matters between the parties.

Niue is a poor island country still largely dependent on external financial assistance for its annual budget and it feels very strongly that it should have a **“fair”** return of the fees paid for registrations of .nu domain names. In its initial discussions with IUSN, every effort was made for a negotiated solution. None have succeeded despite over five years negotiations.

We the people and government of Niue plead with ICANN and the US Department of Commerce through this World Summit on the

Information Society, to please do the right thing and re-delegate Niue's domain name to the people and the Government of Niue.

The Government is aware that the domain name is not to be used for revenue generation. However, this is a rather cynical position given the wealth that has been created for the principals of .NU Domain Ltd and IUSN from Niue's ccTLD. The Government and people of Niue cannot accept this very tenuous argument given the facts in front of us.

Niue wishes and need to use these funds to improve Niue's ICT on the island for all our citizens – today and in years to come.

Working in Partnership in Developing Niue's ICT future.

Finally, the Government and people of Niue again appreciates the invitation to be here and look forward to working together towards the successful delivery of the Action Plan and the Declaration of Principles of this Summit and again to acknowledge through this summit our appreciation to all organisations who have and are continuing to provide assistance towards Niue's ICT development programs.

Kia faka monuina mai he Atua e Fonoaga nai mo e takitaki e halavaka ke kautu e tau pulega ku a fakamau moe pulega ki ai.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I was saying, May God bless us all and may He guide us to successfully achieve the objectives of this summit.

Thank you.

Hon. John Tiakia

GOVERNMENT OF NIUE