



**INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**  
**OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Second Committee of the General Assembly  
Agenda item 51: Information and communication technologies for  
development

Statement by Ambassador Anda Filip  
Permanent Observer

United Nations  
New York, 5 November 2007

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Chairperson,

The digital revolution offers the entire world an extraordinary opportunity. It is a revolution that has been driven forward by the thirst for freedom of men and women throughout the world, by the enterprise of individuals and businesses, by people's willingness to take risks, by the heady pace at which new technologies come on stream and are taken up for use in ever more sophisticated and efficient ways, especially by young people.

The massive impact of the digital revolution raises a series of questions that the world of politics, if it wants to have relevance in the real world, needs to address as a matter of urgency: internet access and governance, the rights and obligations of users, and institutional transparency. In other words, the information society and the Internet in particular must be made to flourish under the flag of democracy.

The IPU is convinced that for the aims of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be achieved, additional reflection on the role of parliaments in the information society is both necessary and timely. IPU, in conjunction with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), and with the assistance of a number of particularly active parliaments, therefore launched in 2006 a new and inclusive project known as the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

The Global Centre for ICT in Parliament is an innovative example of partnership between the United Nations and the world of parliaments. Its philosophy can be resumed as one of cooperation and the sharing of good practices among parliaments. Allow me to share the outcomes of some of its recent activities with you.

An international conference, hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies in March 2007, addressed the issue of the role of parliaments in the information society. Parliamentarians observed that the information society is bringing new opportunities but also new risks that require political choices to be made; that require public debate, political guidelines, and the design of an appropriate institutional framework.

Parliaments have a central role to play in determining these political choices, as a political guarantor against the technocratic risks of the information society and a protector of fundamental rights, including of the protection of socially weaker groups.

The first World e-Parliament Conference in Geneva in October 2007 examined the policy and technical aspects of how parliaments themselves are using ICT. Though the gap in resources between parliaments is clearly visible, all participants shared the desire to use ICT to improve communication between parliaments and citizens, and to modernize parliamentary processes.

In countries where resources are scarce, one of the first objectives of a democratic parliament must be to ensure that legislation is widely accessible to citizens. Access to information and knowledge is a fundamental right that parliaments can help to fulfil by small and concrete steps such as publishing legal texts online.

The IPU is committed to working together with other like-minded partners in order to develop and share good practices in the use of open standards, open source software and parliamentary web sites. The adoption of such practices will help parliaments to become more effective and transparent.

We are also looking forward to the publication of the first Global Report on Parliament and ICT in early 2008, which will establish much-needed baseline data on how and why parliaments around the world are using ICT. Another important initiative in 2008 will focus on how ICT can reduce barriers to access to information for people with disabilities, and specifically the role of parliaments can play in promoting access and appropriate technologies.

Even though many of these themes have been under discussion for some years, a shared and comprehensive solution has yet to be found. We in the Inter-Parliamentary Union shall continue, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, to work towards such a solution. We hope the IPU's structured relationship with the United Nations will reinforce the conviction that our two organisations can cooperate over the long-term, share experience, take joint initiatives and forge common policies.

I thank you for your attention.