



*Permanent Mission of*  
**Malaysia**  
to the United Nations

**HONOURABLE ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE ON  
“INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO MEET  
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)”  
NEW YORK, 13 SEPTEMBER 2005**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organising a special meeting to address this important theme. It is certainly very timely, given the important role that science, technology and innovation (STI) play in development process. In particular, we must recognize the increasing role played by information and communications technology (ICT) in our lives, and the potential it presents to assist us achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which is one of the focus areas of this year's U.N General Assembly.

2. Never before has progress in science and technology held so much promise for the world. From our point of view, it is particularly pertinent to the efforts to eradicate poverty and overcome inequality which are the bane of humanity and the blight on our collective conscience for this millennia. At the same time, we must also not allow the progress in science and technology to widen the disparities which already exist between the rich and the poor. Clearly, we have reached a fork in the road. We must prove to the world and generations to come that at this critical moment in history, we have the will and courage to make the right decision, and to make available the means to see them through.

3. I firmly believe that ensuring greater connectivity and bridging the digital divide are central challenges that we have to first overcome if I.C.T is to achieve its potential as the great enabler and equaliser. The figures relating to the digital divide make grim reading. At present, 1 billion people in the world do not have access to a telephone. Around 800,000 villages, or 30 per cent of all villages worldwide, are still without any kind of connection. Clearly, they are the unfortunate lot who have fallen through *the Net*.

4. At the same time, 942 million people living in the world's developed economies enjoy five times better access to fixed and mobile telephone services, nine times better access to Internet services, and they own 13 times more PCs than the 85 per cent of the world's population living in low and lower-middle income countries.

5. The lack of capital for infrastructure development, which is pivotal to the development process, must be effectively addressed. The lack of discussions and innovative recommendations on securing capital to finance infrastructure projects is disheartening. It is with the purpose of encouraging such discussions that I had proposed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Fund and the O.I.C Infrastructure Bond Fund.

6. At the same time, I believe that the private sector, who are usually the main driving force behind the development of science, technology and innovation as well as creativity in the I.C.T sector, should do more to create products and solutions for the benefit of the poor. Indeed, I believe the private sector need not do this as acts of altruism, but as efforts at market expansion which includes the

poor. There have indeed been inspiring examples in history. Motor cars used to be the preserve only of the elites until Henry Ford created models which were affordable by practically everyone who wanted to own motorcars. Technopreneurs of today must be guided by the same spirit. Failure to do so would result in a diminished market, as well as further exaggeration of the digital divide.

Mr. President,

7. It is now abundantly clear that if the digital divide is to be bridged, and S.T.I as well as I.C.T to be fully deployed for development purposes, partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society organisations (C.S.Os) need to be nurtured and strengthened. The issues are so complex and the problem is so monumental that there is really no alternative except to find solutions through a working together by all three sectors of the partnership.

8. However, Governments cannot avoid the lead role they must play. This is particularly pertinent in the areas of public policy-making, policy coordination and implementation as well as policy development at the regional and international levels. This is particularly relevant to the case of strategic industries in developing countries in which the private sector presence is often negligible.

10. The Civil Society Organizations have a pivotal role to play to ensure equitable sharing of the products of S.C.I and the benefits of the I.C.T Revolution. They can do so given their knowledge of issues at the grassroots level. They can raise public awareness, facilitate networking and mobilise citizens in the democratic process, including bringing in the perspectives of marginalised groups and excluded communities. This is in addition to the more traditional roles played by Civil Society Organizations in ensuring that political and market forces are accountable to the needs of all members of society; as well as encouraging social responsibility and good governance on the part of Governments.

9. The aim of collaboration among the three sectors - that is Government, private sector and civil society - should not only be towards greater specialisation

It should also be for purposes of ensuring that they can each perform better together.

Mr President,

10. In this connection, I cannot over-emphasise the importance of capacity building if S.T.I and I.C.T are to become central to the development process. In this regard, capacity building should fulfil at least two objectives. The first objective is to ensure that those presently marginalised are brought in to share the fruits of scientific progress. The second objective is to develop the necessary capacities in the developing countries so that they are able to become active producers of technology and cease playing the role of mere consumers of technology.

11. As a prerequisite to achieving the first objective, the problem of illiteracy and absence of infrastructure must be resolved. To achieve the second objective, it is essential that S.T.I and I.C.T are utilized in the most relevant, appropriate and effective ways, taking into account social and economic realities. Investments in technology will achieve optimum results only if they are made in areas which are relevant to the needs of the society.

12. Additionally, investments should also focus on areas where there are natural comparative advantages for developing countries. For example, developing countries are normally repositories of abundant biological assets. It is based on this consideration that Malaysia has embarked on a serious development of the country's biotechnology sector. The Malaysian government had launched in April this year, the National Biotechnology Policy. This policy encompasses three phases, namely capacity building (2005 – 2010), creating business out of science (2011 – 2015) and turning Malaysia into a global player (2016 – 2020).

Mr. President,

13. If S.T.I and I.C.T are to assist in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, certain structural issues need to be addressed. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that the intellectual property rights (IPR) regime serve the process of development. There must be a proper balancing of the requirements of the proprietary rights of product producers and the human rights of individuals.

14. Malaysia supports the adoption of a developmental agenda in the work of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). I firmly believe that a WIPO development agenda must go beyond the mere provision of technical assistance. It should meaningfully address and rectify structural impediments posed by the IPR regime on developmental objectives and targets.

Mr. President,

15. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the technological advances that the world has witnessed over the past few decades, in particular in the past decade, unless properly harnessed, can both reduce or exacerbate the

disparities between the richest and the poorest of the world. It is up to all of us, and member states of the United Nations, to summon the political will to recognize certain undeniable facts and make the correct decisions.

16. Thank you.