International Conference on E-Government for Development

10-11 April 2002
Palazzo Reale - Palermo, Italy

AIDE-MEMOIRE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Conference on E-Government for Development, hosted by the Government of Italy – Ministry for Innovation and Technologies - with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), will take place in Palermo, Sicily on 10-11 April 2002.

The objective of the Conference, is to raise awareness on the opportunities offered by e-government for development; to present and explore the use of e-government to foster democracy, efficiency and transparency, therefore increasing the possibility for developing countries to attract foreign investments and financial assistance; and to debate the key challenges facing governments in the design and implementation of e-government programs. This event will also provide a platform for Government leaders and representatives, high-level officials, representatives of civil society organizations and key stakeholders from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to exchange views on principles and elements for an Open Plan of Action on E-government for development. The results of the Conference and the Plan of Action on E-government for development will be presented at the next G8 Summit in Canada in the framework of the activities for the implementation of the DOT Force Genoa Plan of Action.

More than 400 participants from around the world are expected to assist to this event and to benefit from 10 working sessions on best practices and lessons learned on e-government.

I. BACKGROUND

New technologies offer to developing countries a unique opportunity to leapfrog into the future, to speed up their economic and social development and to benefit from the low-cost global information network. Yet, in many countries, poverty, social injustice, conflicts and inequality threaten large sectors of the society, and the majority of the people remain untouched by the technological advances and separated from the rest of the world by a huge divide.

The international experience, and the works of the main international initiatives aimed at identifying ways in which the digital revolution can benefit all the world’s people - the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) and the UN ICT Task Force – have highlighted the contribution that e-government and e-governance may offer in the process of creating digital opportunities for all.

E-government empowers citizens through access to information, improves interactions with business and industry, facilitating better delivery of government services to citizens and more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be greater convenience, improved efficiency of the economic system, increased transparency, and less corruption, leading to increased possibility for developing countries to attract foreign investments and financial assistance.

In its Action Plan presented at Genoa 2001, the DOT Force made reference to the importance of e-government and e-governance in several instances: it stated, “…e-strategies should distinguish and recognize the importance of e-Government for internal efficiency and effectiveness within government, as well as of e-Governance for institutional capacity building, transparency, accountability and its ability to enhance democratic governance. ….”. Together with the endorsement of the DOT Force Plan of Action, the G8 leaders in Genoa, upon proposal of the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, encouraged, in their Final Communiqué ‘…the development of an Action Plan on how e-government can strengthen democracy and the rule of law by empowering citizens and making the provision of essential government services more efficient…’.

The UN ICT Task Force has also mentioned e-governance as a priority action area and
has established a working group on ICT Policy and Governance, as well as one on national and regional e-strategies, in both of which e-governance is a component.

It is in this framework that the Government of Italy has developed an articulated initiative on ‘e-government for development’ aimed at providing an effective and original contribution towards the awareness, planning, implementation of e-government also in those countries that have not or have only partially exploited the potentiality of this important tool for bridging social and economic divides.

The action of Italy is directed towards the achievement of four deliverables:
(a) Development of a “reference digital model” of functions and services of the public administration, adapted to meet specific countries’ requirements;
(b) Implementation of pilot projects of digitalization of selected public administration functions in four partner countries – Albania, Jordan, Mozambique and Tunisia – co-financed by the Government of Italy;
(c) Organization of an international Conference on E-government for Development in Palermo, Sicily, on 10-11 April 2002;
(d) Formulation of a draft proposal to the DOT Force of an Action Plan on how e-government can strengthen democracy and the rule of law by empowering citizens and making the provision of essential government services more efficient.

II. OBJECTIVES

Within this context, the Government of the Republic of Italy, through the Minister for Innovation and Technologies, has invited the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to co-organize the International Conference on E-Government for Development, which will draw together the efforts of the UN ICT Task Force and of the DOT Force in the field of E-government.

The objective of the Conference is to raise awareness on the opportunities offered by e-government for development; to present and explore the use of e-government to foster democracy, transparency and efficiency therefore increasing the possibility for developing countries to attract foreign investments and financial assistance; and, to debate the key challenges facing governments in the design and implementation of e-government programs. In addition to this, the Government of Italy will present in this occasion the ‘reference model for a digital public administration’, that will be released as a ‘public good’ to the outer community.

This event will also provide a platform for Government leaders and representatives, high-level officials, representatives of civil society organizations (NGOs) and key stakeholders from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to exchange views on principles and elements for an Open Plan of Action for E-government development.

III. THEMES FOR DISCUSSION AND ORGANIZATION MODALITY

3.1 Structure of the Conference

The conference will be structured around a plenary session in the morning of the first day during which emerging trends of e-government in the development process will be discussed by selected keynote speakers. The morning session will end with the presentation of the Italian Initiative on E-Government for Development with interventions of representatives
from the four developing countries where pilot projects are being implemented. In the afternoon of the first day and in the morning of the second day, three parallel sessions on best practices will allow participants to attend technical presentations, share their knowledge and discuss relevant issues concerning specific topics of e-government. Finally, elements and principles of an open plan of action for e-government will be debated in the final plenary following interventions from a group of selected high-level panelists.

The themes on which the Conference will focus are the following:

- Global Trends of E-Government in the Development Process
- The Italian Initiative on E-Government for Development
- An Enabling Environment for E-Government (parallel session)
- E-Government Economic Benefits (parallel session)
- E-Government Social Benefits (parallel session)
- E-Government Impacts on Effectiveness, Efficiency and Transparency (parallel session)
- E-Governance and E-Democracy (parallel session)
- Funding and Public-Private Partnerships (parallel session)
- Elements and Principles for an Open Plan of Action for E-Government Development

For each of the parallel sessions indicated above, three to four ‘best practices’ will be presented by technical speakers from both developing and developed countries. Open discussions facilitated by the Chairs of the sessions will follow the presentations.

3.2 Participants

It is expected that about 450 participants will gather in Palermo to attend the Conference. They will include ministers and senior government officials from developing countries, members of the DOT Force, members and advisors of the UN ICT TF, representatives from civil society organizations and the private sector, and representatives from international organizations.

3.3 Official languages

The official languages of the Conference will be English, French and Italian.