# DECLARATION

## ON
## YOUTH AND ICT FOR
## DEVELOPMENT

Adopted at the
MELAKA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE

21-24 June 2003
Melaka, Malaysia

*Preamble*

We the 206 youth delegates from 32 nations have convened at the Third Melaka International Youth Dialogue (MIYD) under the theme **Youth and ICT for Development,** from the 21st to the 24th of June 2003, at the Century Mahkota Hotel, Melaka, Malaysia.

We would like to thank the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), Melaka State Government, Asian Youth Council, Malaysian Youth Council, Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia, who have organised and sponsored the MIYD 2003 and all who have ensured that this has been a successful dialogue.

We recognise the potential contribution of ICT towards youth development and acknowledge that ICT can play a significant role in critical issues including HIV/AIDS, youth employment, poverty alleviation, gender issues and governance.

We encourage developing countries to harness ICT for local content creation and dissemination to encourage better and more accurate representation of themselves in the information world.

Our input will be submitted to the World Summit on the Information Society 2003 (WSIS) as input from the youth of various national, regional and international non-governmental organisations who have attended MIYD 2003. We call upon governments to not only include young people in their delegations to the WSIS but also to actively involve them.

*A.    Providing Internet Connectivity*

**Providing Internet connectivity is a challenging and daunting task, but it has to be recognised that Internet connectivity opens and paves the way for nations and individuals to compete in a globalised world. Youth should be able to tap into this resource in order to maximise on their potential for development.**

**Key issues affecting Internet connectivity were identified and discussed during this Dialogue.**

We recommend the following:

1. In order to realise a sustainable return on investment from heavy private sector investments in the provision of Internet connectivity, NGOs, governments and the private sector need to work in concert to translate people's desires and needs for ICT into a thriving market for Internet access.
2. A mechanism to translate diverse languages into a commonly accepted language should be created to encourage greater Internet usage and to improve cross-cultural understanding.
3. National communication infrastructures should be liberalised and the provision of Internet access should not be drawn along national lines especially where it makes no economic sense to do so.
4. Governments should make computer education a compulsory part of the national school curriculum to ensure, at least, a minimal computer literacy among all segments of the youth population.
5. There is a need to look into hybrid solutions to improve Internet access as hybrid solutions build on existing infrastructure and resources.
6. Satellite technologies should be installed in remote geographical areas to provide the people of these areas with Internet access.

Mankind is in the midst of a powerful technological revolution. Those with understanding of and access to these new technologies have immense potential to shape the structures and trends of society. Those who do not, risk succumbing to dictatorship by those who control these trends and structures. The gap between these 'haves' and 'have nots', commonly known as the digital divide, is drawn along many lines such as gender, age, income, social standing, race and religion.

We recognize that in modern society, access to ICT is a vital need. We therefore recommend that universal access to ICT be accepted as an international youth, if not human, right. There is a need to look into communal usage and hybrid solutions as an alternative to PCs, where individual PC ownership is not a viable means of gaining access to ICT.

We recommend the following measures:

1. Businesses involved in the provision of hardware and software should be made aware of their social responsibility to provide for special needs and marginalized groups.
2. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and International Telecommunications Union should take the lead in promoting tri-sectoral, cross border partnerships, to provide universal ICT access.
3. Governments should create national plans and take responsibility for ensuring the provision of basic infrastructure, ICT literacy, financing mechanisms, network connectivity, and all other pre-requisites for the adoption and usage of ICT.
4. Governments should give incentives to encourage win-win partnerships between open-source and commercial software providers, especially in marginalized areas currently underserved or neglected by both parties.


5. Governments should create an environment that would allow the development of alternative forms of software with the long-term view of allowing the market to diversify.

6. Software and content providers provide cheaper alternatives to marginalized communities. In the absence of cheaper forms of software, we suggest that governments formulate strategies and policies to deal with issues of intellectual property rights based on their particular circumstances.

*C. ICT for Youth Development*

We recognize ICT as a global access point for youth. ICT can provide bases for information sharing. With ICT, youth have a medium that they can personalise to express themselves and be heard. Using ICT, youth can empower themselves to influence, impact and inspire other youth.

We recommend the following measures:

1. Youth be informed and trained to create employment initiatives through ICT. Best practice initiatives can be used to demonstrate how youth can create their own opportunities for development.
2. Youth use ICT to communicate and interact with other youth in order to help themselves improve in all aspects of their lives (Youth for Youth).
3. Youth be proactive and create their own business opportunities via the Internet – they should not only be provided with the necessary resources needed to launch any venture, but they need to be guided and supported to create sustainable ventures. Government, NGOs, and the private sector should encourage the setting up of Incubator Programmes to give young, newly skilled entrepreneurs an opportunity to develop their own ICT start-ups.
4. Youth should be trained not only to use but also to innovate using ICT so that ICT can be a great resource in fostering development.
5. Government adopt a long-term commitment towards providing ICT by developing and implementing clear policies and guidelines.
6. In an era where youth are better positioned to play leadership roles, especially in areas affected by ICT, governments should educate and equip older generation leaders to progressively pass on their leadership mantles to the younger generation through mentoring programmes.

Adopted at Melaka on this 24th day of June 2003.