

In this regard I would like to emphasize that my government considers massifying the use of information technologies and communications as a top priority to support growth and enhance competitiveness, and ensure our productive sectors access to international markets and thus reinforce the job creation policy.

India is an example of the positive results that technical development brings to a country having a very large human capital. Our joint work in the field of transfer of technology and development will constitute a significant contribution to my country peace.

Fifty years ago, Prime Minister Nehru had the vision of investing in technology institutes and today we see the fruits of such vision: the high tech industry has grown 25 fold in the last decade, software exports went from \$40 million dollars to almost \$10 billion dollars and created almost three hundred thousand jobs paid at twice the average industrial salary.

Likewise, in my country we hope that cooperation in high tech areas such as the pharmaceutical and software industries, and in which India is very competitive, will lead us to form part, together with you, of the changes and new discoveries made in this millenium, by providing us with the instruments required for fostering my people's development, combating poverty, and achieving peace.

I am a firm believer in the potential of information technologies to achieve a more egalitarian society in the world and also in my country.

Based on this conviction my government designed the so called "Connectivity Agenda" a State policy aimed at massifying the use of information technologies and in so doing increase the productive sectors' competitiveness, modernize State agencies and government institutions, and socialize access to information.

My government structured and consolidated this plan with two clear objectives in mind:

We would like to avail ourselves of the opportunities offered by information technologies and thus take a leap in our development, and close the gap that separate us from more developed countries.

We want to close this existing gap between Colombian citizens by guaranteeing access to information, and in so doing offer new education and information opportunities to our youth.

We would like to promote the Colombian business sectors' integration into the new economic model created by the society of knowledge.

We want to foster an environment that incentivates foreign investment and fosters the establishment of local companies that offer goods and services connected to information technologies.

And finally we wish to create a new State model that delivers better services, through transparent management and with adequate citizen control.

In short, the Connectivity Agenda is the Colombian Government's response to the need to offer an attractive economic environment and to actively participate as world-class player in this new economy of knowledge.

We also acknowledge the importance of tailoring the Colombian development model to that of a society that fosters the use and application of information technologies.

We are working in all fronts: both in the elimination of barriers to guarantee access to information technologies, as well as in education and in supporting the business sector so that it may join the new economy.

I want my government's legacy to be a changed country, not only in the subject of peace, but also for having taken that leap that will project us with great force into the future. Therefore, the Connectivity Agenda, which we have come to call "The Leap to Internet", is one of my government's priority programs and is being coordinated directly by the Presidency of the Republic.

Thanks to the development of the Connectivity Agenda, undertaken and with the support of national and international advisors, we are convinced more than ever before of my country's potential to develop a sound, world class industry around software development, related services and other businesses that stem from information technology, as is the case with the so called "Call Centers", telesurveillance, and other similar services.

We have studied in great detail the success stories of countries like India that, in a strategy coordinated by the private and public sectors and the academia, in a relatively short of time changed the course of its fate and today are known worldwide for their information technology industry, countries from which we would like to learn and with whom we hope to associate ourselves to develop our own potential.

We would like to enhance the important exchange of experiences with India. We are presently working with an Indian advisor on the design of a very intense training and certification program for specialized software developers. We also welcome alliances between Colombian and Indian companies having more to offer than just specialized training services. We also want to set up software factories with you, because these are the basis for the growth of this industry in Colombia, which must clearly target international markets.

This is the reason why we attach great importance to this visit. We think we have a lot to learn from the excellent Indian experience and I wanted to see it first hand

together with my closest advisors in this field. This is an ideal occasion to strengthen our business ties and to create new alliances that will allow us to make the best use of the overwhelming opportunities one finds in the information technology market.

We have come here today with our most dynamic industrialists with the purpose of translating our desires into reality.