

Brazil's Minister Defends Free and Open Software at World Information Summit

Contributed by Spensy Pimentel
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The Brazilian Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil, head of Brazil's delegation to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), delivered the official Brazilian address, Wednesday, November 16, at the event.

The gist of his remarks was the importance of the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to generate development and combat inequalities.

"The Geneva phase, in 2003, enshrined the basic concept that information and communication technologies should be placed in the service of the development goals established in the Declaration of the Millenium," he said.

In this context the Minister defended the importance of "free and open" software as operating system Linux as a strategic tool for the generation of autonomous technologies and in the fight against the digital exclusion extant in the country.

"Brazil must seek innovative products and standardize technological solutions based on alternative licensing models and open platforms."

Gil recalled that only 30 million Brazilians, of a total population of 170 million, have access to computers.

"Free and open software is an essential option for developing countries that, like Brazil, are struggling in the face of scarce resources for government policies," the Minister stated.

"The advantages of free software are enormous, ranging from cost savings to job creation," he added, pointing out, as well, that Brazil has been devising cooperation agreements in this area with Latin American and African countries.

In the sphere of Internet governance, Gil declared that Brazil espouses the principles of multilateralism, transparency, and democracy and, therefore, backed the proposal that should give rise to the implantation of the Internet Governance Forum in 2006.

In his speech, Gil also highlighted Brazilian initiatives to use the new technologies on behalf of citizenship and democracy.

He referred to the Electronic Government program, as well as the use of ICTs in areas such as elections, through the use of electronic ballot boxes, tax collection, Social Security, and the National Health System.

In the area of social inclusion, he mentioned programs for digital inclusion and access to digital culture.

Gil also remarked that the event in Tunis marks "the entry of the United Nations into the 21st century."

"In the year in which its 60th anniversary is being commemorated, the United Nations, by holding the WSIS, is offering new evidence of its potential as an instrument and agent of renewal."

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