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**High-level roundtable on "Progress made in the implementation of and
follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes
at the regional and international levels"**

Statement submitted by

Mr. Andrew Staines
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the to the United Nations Office
and other international organizations in Geneva
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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Mr. A. Staines

Thank you Chair and good afternoon to everyone.

I would like to thank the Commission on Science and Technology for Development for organising this roundtable and for the invitation.

Today's discussion allows us to share experiences, knowledge and ideas, linking the WSIS outcomes to the Sustainable Development Goals and maximising our collective effort to achieve the SDGs.

I'd like to cover, briefly, three main areas.

I'll start with a few comments on the substance, then I'll turn to the process and finally, I'd like to say a few words about e-commerce and eTrade for All, by way of example.

So, firstly, on the substance.

The UK is fully committed to implementing the WSIS Outcomes and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and believes the two can be mutually reinforcing, towards the objective of building a people-centred, an inclusive and a development-oriented information society.

ICTs - Information Communication Technologies - are key enablers in achieving the WSIS objectives and the SDGs.

We, at the international level, need to support and promote an environment that will allow for greater connectivity and for innovations and technologies to flourish.

We must engage in discussion and debate around a number of important issues such as investment, infrastructure, affordability, consumer protection, skills, inclusiveness, diversity and better regulation.

But, we must also not lose sight of the potential for new technologies to close the digital divide. New technology can improve access to basic services, including financial services, health and education, underpinned by a free, open and secure Internet.

The World Economic Forum, in its recent report on the democratic digital divide, highlighted the potential of technology to facilitate more direct interaction between populations and governments; and how an improved government online presence can significantly increase the efficiency of public administration.

In December, the eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference will take place in Buenos Aires and also provides an opportunity to advance some of issues. It will be an important opportunity to agree on some outcomes on e-commerce, perhaps improving the protection for consumers online, or strengthened online payments, as part of a wider set of balanced outcomes.

My second point is around our approach to these issues. In order to achieve everything that we have committed to, we will need to overcome the silos that exist in Geneva and in many of our capitals.

The nature of the digital revolution, means that working in silos is no longer sustainable.

Cooperation is needed more than ever.

Digital policy is no longer confined to a small number of technical experts. For much of the 1980s and 1990s and the first years of this decade, digital policy was about designing more powerful computers, or larger networks or different software.

This is no longer the case. Digital technology is revolutionising the way in which we live our lives, from education to healthcare and from work to leisure, and this is equally true of international development. Digital policy needs to cut across our wider international and domestic policies.

It is for that reason, we need to ensure the maximum collaboration in Geneva: between the international organisations, between the members and with the many stakeholders.

Sectors can't work individually anymore in this interconnected environment, because the decisions, progress and innovations of one will impact others.

Governments won't achieve this objective on their own. Trust and transparency, are only meaningful from the perspective of the citizen or the individual user of a service.

All stakeholders need to be involved to fully grasp the benefits of the digital economy.

Geneva has a unique role in all of this. The international bodies here have particularly important roles to play in creating an environment that will ensure broad-based social and economic development from the information society. The digital agenda is common to a number of international organisations.

UNCTAD and CSTD, the WTO, ITU and WIPO each has a role to play and a contribution to make, as do many of the other UN specialised agencies based here.

These organisations need to work hand-in-hand to unlock the enormous potential of a genuinely global digital economy, breaking the silos to guarantee that work is not duplicated and that we all benefit from each other expertise.

Only then, will we be truly working together towards achieving a vibrant, dynamic and inclusive information society.

Thirdly, allow me to highlight a concrete example of this cooperation, from UNCTAD e-commerce week held two weeks ago.

The eTrade project illustrates how the Geneva organisations can work together.

Many of you attended e-commerce week, so I won't speak at length. But for those of you that missed it, the project is developed around three objectives:

- firstly, to deepen our shared understanding of the risks, opportunities, challenges and solutions around e-commerce;
- secondly, to mobilise resources in support of e-commerce projects in the developing world; and
- thirdly, to help partners to work more effectively and efficiently together on this important agenda.

In summary, "eTrade for All" aims to improve the ability of developing countries, and particularly Least developed countries, to use and benefit from e-commerce

As a result of this initiative, and with the support of the UK and other partners, UNCTAD is helping the Government of Rwanda to deliver its own plans on e-commerce.

The e-Trade for All Online Platform, to which the UK has provided financial support, will also play an important role in delivering this objective.

This is a really concrete example of how international organisations, governments from donor and recipient countries, civil society and the private sector can work together to find e-commerce solutions that work in developing countries and I urge you all to take a look.

I'll wrap up with this example. In conclusion, each of us has a role to play in implementing the WSIS outcomes and achieving the SDGs, however it is only by working together that our objectives can be reached.

The UK will continue to be one of the most ardent supporters of an ambitious digital agenda and ensure that we all move in the same direction to close the digital divide. Sharing our experience and knowledge, like we are doing today, is crucial to overcome the challenges and fully embrace the opportunities of the information society.

Thank you very much.

