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

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Speaking Points Amb. Thomas Schneider, Swiss Government

Excellencies, Mr. Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

- On behalf of Madam Federal Councilor and President of the Swiss Confederation, Ms. Doris Leuthard, which I am representing here today, I would like to thank Mr Secretary-General (of UNCTAD) Dr. Muikas Kituyi and the CSTD for the kind invitation to participate in today’s High Level roundtable.

- Switzerland considers the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an important framework to mainstream sustainability in all policies and practices. The 2030 Agenda calls for a right mix of policies and effective mechanisms to implement these policies.

- There is no doubt, and we can see it in the report on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up of the WSIS, but also in the report about the findings of the discussions at the Intersessional meeting about new innovation approaches to support the implementation to SDGs, as well in a number of publications and information published by UN Agencies like the mapping done by ITU of how ICT can contribute to the SDGs:

- ICTs play a crucial role and can greatly contribute to the realization of the post 2015 development goals - if we harness their full potential. We need to make sure that all stakeholders, across all sectors, are aware of the vast possibilities (but also of the risks) of ICTs and demonstrate with concrete examples how ICT can contribute to the realization of the SDGs. We think this requires pragmatic and practice-oriented approaches.
- And this brings me to the **issue that I would like to focus on** here:

- **Key** to meet the targets set out in the 2030 Agenda will be a **constructive cooperation and strong partnerships** between all stakeholders: governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, the technical and academic community.

- We need to **leverage** networks and research, **stimulate innovation**, **scale up** current initiatives and design new solutions in an **inclusive and participatory way**. We need to connect different actors and provide them with opportunities to exchange experiences, best practices, and to discuss the challenges at hand.

- And we need to **connect those people working** on implementing SDGs in the 2030 Agenda that serves as a kind of a “global overall strategy”, **with those working on national and regional digital strategies** so that **all these and other strategies are aligned** and work hand in hand.

- **Enhancing cooperation on national and international levels** between governments and with all stakeholders is **not a new idea**. But it is **still not sufficiently done** and **often not with the right attitude**.

- Also on **national levels**, we are still **working too much in silos**, and **do not cooperate** and share information and experience enough and in the way we should

- Of course, calls for constructive cooperation are **easily made to difficult to implement**:

- As we all know from our daily lives, there are a **number of obstacles to overcome**:

- **Between different ministries** and government agencies, there is **often competition for resources, attention and recognition**
There is often mistrust and prejudices between stakeholders on national level.

There are too many voices of people active on the ground that are not heard.

So we do not just need new technologies, but we also need a new culture, a new spirit of cooperation and sharing among all stakeholders.

We governments have a key role in this – both on national and international levels:

We need to understand and show by example that it is a win-win for all if ministries and government agencies cooperate and support each other in their work.

We also need to listen and respond to the needs of our citizens and businesses.

That includes also listening to their constructive criticism, because often businesses and civil society have experience that governments do not have.

We need to earn their trust and willingness to cooperate through being accountable to them.

But we also need to build capacities of businesses and citizens that they do understand that it is also in their interest that they act responsibly and accountably to society as well.

So we need to foster such a new culture of cooperation on national and international levels.

To give you one example of such a cooperation on national level: the Swiss government agencies responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda have invited all government agencies and interested stakeholders to bring in their views and experiences into our national 2030 assessment so that we all understand where we are and what needs to be done next.
- This has **allowed our office and other actors to come into the process** and share our experience about **where ICT and digitization will have an impact on the SDGs** and their implementation which has been a great learning experience for and better cooperation of many actors involved in this on national level.

- And for your information: **Switzerland** is one of the countries that **participates in the UN High Level Political Forum** in order to share its experiences in implementing the 2030 Agenda with other interested countries.

- On **international level**, there are number of useful Fora for multistakeholder dialogue and exchange of experience, **like the WSIS Forum** to take place in June here in Geneva.

- And **of course we attach great importance** to the **UN Internet Governance Forum**, as an **open and inclusive bottom-up platform**, which brings together engaged experts and decision-makers from all over the world and offers a **unique venue to identify and discuss** decisive and emerging issues related to internet governance and to the digitization of our societies and economies.

- **Switzerland** will be the **host of the 12th annual IGF**, which will be held from 18 to 21 December 2017 at this very location - the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The **overarching theme** for this year’s annual meeting is **“Shape your Digital Future!”** The preparations are currently well underway and we invite you all to contribute to this inclusive and bottom-up process.

- With over 30 International Organizations and 250 NGOs, Think Tanks and other private institutions, **Geneva is one of the main hubs of the world where digital policies are being debated, evaluated and adopted**. We think that having the **IGF 2017 in Geneva provides a unique opportunity** to break the silos and bring together experts and decision-makers from all sectors to
discuss digital policy issues and their linkages to the SDGs and to embark on new constructive cooperation and partnerships.

- To conclude, we would like to thank not only the CSTD, but also all other IGOs and all private actors for your attention and would like to invite you all and your colleagues to come to Geneva and use the IGF for embarking on such a new culture of cooperation that we will need to develop jointly in order to achieve the SDGs so that no-one will be left behind.

- Thank you.