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Opening Ceremony

Statement submitted by

Mr. Houlin Zhao
Secretary-General, International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

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CSTD, Twenty First Session, Opening Remarks
Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General, ITU
Geneva, 14 May 2018

Good morning. I come here today to reaffirm the bonds between development and information and communication technologies (ICTs). During your deliberations, you will have the opportunity to review **ITU's Contribution to the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes 2017**. In this report, we show the direct links between ITU's WSIS Implementation activities and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have also created a mapping tool to help you better understand the impact of ITU's strategic goals, outputs and actions on the SDGs and WSIS Action Lines.

This morning I want to address the WSIS Implementation and Facilitation activities led and coordinated by ITU, starting with the successful outcomes of the **WSIS Forum 2018**. Then I will address the themes of our meeting this year and what ITU is doing in the areas of renewable energy, gender, and youth.

Over 2,500 participants representing all regions of the world and all stakeholders contributed to the Forum in Geneva last March to explore how to leverage the power of ICTs to achieve the SDGs and WSIS Action Lines. We had more than 500 high-level representatives, including ministers, ambassadors, and leaders from the private sector, academia and civil society. And we recognized a number of WSIS Prize Winners and Champions for their outstanding work on the ground. Under the chairmanship of His Excellency Majed Sultan Al Mesmar, Deputy Director General of the United Arab Emirates' Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), all these stakeholders engaged on issues as diverse and critical as education, health, the environment, employment, infrastructure, and innovation.

This year the WSIS Forum gave us an opportunity to celebrate the 15-year anniversary of the first phase of WSIS – 15 years of cooperation between all WSIS stakeholders to make ICTs a critical driver of global development. With each passing year, the Forum welcomes new partners and youth representation keeps growing. The WSIS Forum has now emerged as the leading ICT for development event in the world.

To strengthen the alignment of the WSIS Process with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I have submitted the outcomes of the WSIS Forum 2018 to the UN High-

Level Political Forum (HLPF). And to highlight the contribution of the WSIS Action Lines to the SDGs, ITU and the UN Action Line Facilitators have created a document focusing on what these Actions Lines mean for the “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies,” the theme of HLPF 2018. As the current chair of the **United Nations Group on the Information Society**, I am pleased to announce that our group will issue a joint statement and organize a side event at the High-Level Political Forum 2018.

Let me now turn to the priority themes identified by the CSTD this year.

ICTs have an important role to play in increasing the share of renewable energy by 2030. At ITU, we are working hard to mitigate the impact of the ICT sector on the environment, be it by limiting the volume of e-waste or reducing greenhouse gas emissions for electronic devices.

Gender equality is another one of our priorities. Along with infrastructure, investment and innovation, inclusivity is one the four pillars (the “4 I’s”) at the heart of ITU’s strategy to bridge the digital divide and harness the power of ICTs towards the achievement of the SDGs and WSIS Action Lines. We are involved in a number of initiatives like EQUALS, a ground-breaking global network to improve women’s access to technology, build relevant digital and STEM skills, and promote female leadership in the tech sector.

I would also like to mention the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs Campaign, an initiative led by ITU and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to equip 5 million young women and men with job-ready digital skills by 2030 in support of the SDGs. This campaign is part of the first-ever, comprehensive United Nations system-wide effort for the promotion of youth employment worldwide.

If you want to learn more about ICT projects transforming people’s lives, I invite you to participate in the **WSIS Stocktaking Platform**. With more than 300,000 registered stakeholders, it is a unique platform for ICT4SDG projects and an invaluable evidence-based policy guide for all WSIS Stakeholders.

Before I close, I want to emphasize the importance of tracking progress. The **Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development** has recently established a Task Group on the SDGs.

Co-led by ITU and UN-DESA, the Task Group will develop a list of thematic indicators to help countries measure their progress in the adoption and use of ICTs in different sectors of the economy. And that's in addition to the indicators included in the Global SDG Indicators Framework.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the lead UN agency for ICTs, ITU plays an important role in the facilitation and implementation of the WSIS outcomes and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But we wouldn't be able to do it without you. I want to extend my sincere thanks to our UN family co-organizers of the WSIS Forum: UNESCO, UNCTAD, and UNDP; as well as all the other UN agencies that work closely with us in implementing the WSIS Process.

I was very pleased to see UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed open the WSIS Forum 2018. Having all these heads and deputies of the entire UN family engage with all the other WSIS stakeholders is a testament to our shared commitment to the future implementation of WSIS, and a guiding star as we continue to align the WSIS process with the SDGs.

I wish you all a successful meeting and look forward to welcoming you to ITU for the AI for Good Summit this week. So let us continue to strengthen the implementation of WSIS Action Lines. Let's continue to work together for a just and equal information society.

Thank you.

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