Presentation of the Report of the Secretary-General on Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit of the Information Society at the regional and international levels.

Statement by
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2nd Committee
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to introduce the Report of the Secretary-General on Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit of the Information Society at the regional and international levels (A/72/64-E/2017/12). The report has been prepared at the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/46 with a view to highlight major activities undertaken by stakeholders to implement WSIS outcomes in 2016 and to share effective practices and lessons learned.

At the outset, let me thank the 28 United Nations entities and other international organisations and stakeholders that kindly provided inputs for the preparation of the report. Also, I would like to let you know that we have prepared a conference room paper (E/CN.16/2017/CRP.2) that complements the Report of the Secretary-General.

I will highlight three issues from the report:

1) The trends in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs);
2) The impact of new and emerging technologies on the society; and
3) The recent developments related to Internet Governance that have taken place since last year.

The report of the SG highlights the important advances in terms of coverage and access but it also notes that there are still significant gaps between and within countries. Despite the advances, ICTs are more easily available, of better quality, and more widely used in developed countries than in developing countries. Moreover, broadband speeds are faster and the cost of access is lower in relation to average household income in the former than in the latter.

Latest estimates show that 53% of households has Internet at home while 60% of the world's population has at least one mobile cellular subscription. These numbers show an important increase when comparing with data from 2005, when only 15.8% of people had access to Internet and only 18.4% of households had this technology at home. In fact, of the 750 million people who became Internet users in the past few years 98% live in developing countries.

Yet, despite the advances in ICTs access, more than half of the world's population is still offline, There are significant digital divides across regions. While in Europe 84% of households has Internet connection, in Africa this number is only 18%. In terms of gender divide, recent estimates show that women are 12% less like to use the Internet. However, the gap is higher in Africa where women are 25% less likely to use the Internet, while in LDCs only one out of seven women is using the Internet compared with one out of five men.

Similarly there are also important divides when considering youth access to Internet. In developed countries, 94% of young people use the Internet, compared with 67% in developing countries and only 30% in LDCs. Moreover, according to recent estimates, nearly 9 out of 10 young individuals not using the Internet live in Africa or Asia and the Pacific.

Investment in infrastructure is critical to tackle inequalities in access, but it is only one part of the challenge. Other barriers hindering the deployment of ICTs include: geographical challenges in landlocked countries and small island states; lack of complementary infrastructure such as electrical power networks still common in rural areas; and weaknesses in the legal and regulatory environment for investment and innovation. Cost, capabilities and content are also crucial. Altogether, these issues stress the need for governments, the private sector and civil society to

redouble their efforts to ensure societies not only access ICTs but also benefit from the opportunities they provide.

When discussing ICT trends we cannot ignore the fact that the digital economy is expanding very fast, including in developing countries. Just last week, UNCTAD launched its "Information Economy Report 2017". This year's flagship report is focused on digitalization, trade and development. Digital technologies are reshaping the economic landscape, affecting production, trade and global value chains. The report shows that the rapid evolution of the digital economy is affecting virtually all sectors and businesses; the production of ICT goods and services now account for some 6.5% of global GDP; trade in ICT services surged by 40% between 2010 and 2015, in a period when overall trade was quite stagnant; e-commerce is expanding very fast, reaching $25 trillion in 2015. Our data shows concrete evidence that the digital economy is expanding fast in the global South. In these countries, E-commerce and other digital applications are helping a growing number of small businesses and entrepreneurs to connect with global markets and open up new ways of generating income. They are being leveraged to promote business, including the empowerment of women as entrepreneurs and traders, and to support productive activities.

On the second point of my presentation, on the impact of new and emerging technologies on societies, the report of the SG discusses the rapid pace of change currently taking place in ICTs and the uncertain impact that this will have on global economic and social development. One relative certainty is that the future will not simply be an extrapolation of the present, especially as a result of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics, which will be applied to a wide variety of businesses and other technologies as AI becomes a utility and the world is wired up by the Internet of Things. These and other technologies will bring disruption throughout society, from the lives of individuals to the fate of businesses, the restructuring of cities, and the organization of governments. For instance, AI has advanced image recognition to exceed human capabilities, greatly improved language translation, including voice translation through natural language processing (NLP), and proven more accurate than doctors in diagnosing some cancers.

New and emerging technologies will also have a profound impact on jobs and the nature of work. Technological advances will likely create new markets and jobs for instance through online platforms and the sharing economy. At the same time, these advances will also disrupt existing labor markets and sectors--leading to increased job polarization and widening income inequalities.

At the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), we are currently working on identifying the digital competence needed to take advantage of new and emerging technologies. This is a continuation of the Commission's work on foresight for digital development.

At UNCTAD we are actively working to enhance the understanding of these issues while taking practical steps to help developing countries to take advantage of increasing digitalization and technological change. As part of our work on the digital economy, we have recently launched rapid assessments of the "ecommerce readiness", which provide evaluations of the ecommerce preparedness of countries. Further, last year we launched the initiative "eTrade4All" with a view to improve the ability of developing countries, and particularly LDCs, to use and benefit from e-commerce. UNCTAD calls on the international community to expand its support to the digital economy on a massive scale and invites countries to collaborate and share experiences about both the benefits and costs from digitalization.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Before I conclude I would like to briefly share some recent developments in internet governance that took place since last year. Firstly, in September 2016, the functions of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), which manages Internet protocol assignments, number resources and root-zone management, were transferred from the United States government to new stewardship arrangements overseen by the global, multistakeholder Internet community.

Secondly, as you may know, in its outcome document of the overall review of WSIS+10, the General Assembly requested the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to establish a working group to develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis Agenda. The Group should report to the CSTD in its 21st annual session in 2018. I would like to report that the working group was

established in May 2016 and so far it has met four times since its creation. The fifth and final meeting of the Working Group is scheduled to take place next January in Geneva, Switzerland.

Finally, the 11th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum took place in Jalisco, Mexico under the theme "Enabling inclusive and sustainable growth." More than 2,000 people attended this multistakeholder annual event. The 12th IGF meeting will take place on 18-21 December in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ladies and Gentleman,

ICTs are becoming ever more central to the development of economies and societies, and will play a cross-cutting role in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. At UNCTAD we pledge full support to the work of the CSTD in making sure that these new and emerging technologies will leave no one behind.

Thank you!