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**Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the
World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international
level**

Statement by

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The Gambia

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REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND DIGITAL ECONOMY
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**Statement for the Honorable Ousman Bah- Minister for
Communications and Digital Economy, Republic of The Gambia -
Agenda Item 2: High-level panel on progress made in the
implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit
on the Information Society – Special Ministerial Segment
17th April 2024, Geneva Switzerland**

Mr. Moderator, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the UNCTAD Secretary General Madame Rebecca Grynspan for inviting me to the 27th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

Mr. Moderator,

The Gambia welcomes this Special Ministerial Segment on progress made in the implementation of and follow – up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and discussion on WSIS+20 review. ICTs are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building a people-centered, inclusive Information Society.

The Gambian Context

The Gambia recognizes the transformative potential of ICTs. We've made significant strides in recent years as subsequently outlined:

- **Increased internet penetration:** We have witnessed a surge in mobile phone penetration of **more than 113%**, enabling greater access to information and services **across all sectors**.
- **E-government initiatives:** We are implementing a **people-centered e-government program anchored on the provision of timely and efficient public service through robust platforms**.
- **All these, are geared towards significantly increasing service delivery and fostering citizen participation in the governance process.**

WSIS and the 2030 Agenda

The digital divide remains a barrier, particularly for women and rural populations. Furthermore, ensuring inclusive and equitable access to affordable ICTs requires continuous efforts.

The Gambia emphasizes the need for strong alignment between WSIS and the 2030 Agenda. ICTs are essential tools for progress on various SDGs, including education, healthcare, and environmental protection.

Similarly, the Gambia government is prioritizing and strengthening digital literacy to ensure rapid uptake and increased participation in the digital economy.

The need to accelerate the creation of the digital economy is driving recent Government efforts to put in place a robust national switch to support MSME ecosystem across international trade.

Distinguished Delegates

In order to bridge the digital divide in the Gambia, the government is

currently embarking on key initiatives including the deployment of the second subsea cable to be fully commissioned in 2025 and also the utilization of satellite as a viable connectivity source for rural Gambia. On top of this, the Ministry has developed infrastructure-sharing regulations and expects to formulate a dig one policy through the WARDIP Gambia project this year. This will help ensure infrastructure co-location amongst MNOs, especially in the unserved and underserved communities.

These measures will significantly help address the digital divide in the Gambia. The rollout of technology hubs across all sectors will also be a catalyst for innovation in rural Gambia.

It is worth mentioning that the Government of The Gambia (GoTG) is prioritizing the rollout of targeted digital development initiatives including capacity building (digital skills) for women, girls, and persons with disabilities. This will help empower and position them as active players in the innovation space and digital economy

As part of the efforts to be a cyber-resilient digital transformation process and also ensure that individual liberties are safeguarded along the way, the Ministry is finalizing the formulation of the Cyber Crime Bill – which has been presented to the National Assembly for enactment and will be followed with the Data Protection and Privacy Bill.

In addition, the GoTG has ratified the AU Malabo Convention in March 2024.

Looking Ahead to WSIS+20

As we approach the WSIS+20 review in 2025, The Gambia calls for the following:

- We must recommit to the WSIS principles and bridge the digital divide to ensure inclusive information and knowledge societies.

- The WSIS framework needs to adapt to address new emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, and blockchain and ensure their responsible development.
- All stakeholders - governments, civil society, and the private sector – must work together to realize the WSIS vision for a sustainable information society for all.

In conclusion, The Gambia is committed to playing an active role in this process. We believe that through collective efforts, we can leverage ICTs to build a more prosperous and inclusive future.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.