COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

17TH SESSION

OPENING CEREMONY

10.00, MONDAY 12 MAY 2014
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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SECRETARY-GENERAL,
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

- It is a great pleasure to be here with you this morning for the opening of the 17th Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

- Science and technology are changing the world in ways we could not even have imagined – even ten or twenty years ago – and scientific and technological progress continues to accelerate every single year.

- This is not of course innovation for the sake of it, but about putting scientific and technological advances at the service of humanity.

- It is about putting people at the centre – through the use of innovative real-life applications, in fields such as education, healthcare, and good governance.

- In the 21st century, and in shaping the post-2015 development agenda, we simply cannot ignore the vital role that science and technology will play in improving the lives of every single person on the planet.

- This was recognized by the Global Youth Summit, which was held in Costa Rica last September, under the theme of 'BYND 2015'.

- The Summit was a tremendous opportunity for young people around the world to make their voice heard, and well over 8,000 young delegates from 173 countries contributed to the Summit's crowdsourcing platform.

- This resulted in the BYND2015 declaration, which President Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica took to the UN General Assembly last year, and which serves as a high-level framework to encourage and guide ITU Members in the development of their own ICT-based youth initiatives.

- It was also recognized by the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which as you know was set up by ITU and UNESCO in 2010 to help accelerate progress towards meeting the MDGs.

- At our most recent meeting, in March, in Dublin, we saw Commissioner after Commissioner take the floor to stress the importance of ICTs, and especially broadband, in ensuring sustainable development as we move forward,

and the need to have this formally recognized in the post-2015 development process.

- Clearly, we all recognize this – so why are science and technology not playing a more central role in the post-2015 development process?

- This is the key message that I would like to share with you today: and let us resolve, here at CSTD, to send a strong and clear message to the United Nations about making sure that the new post-2015 goals and targets put science and technology firmly at the centre of the stage, right where they belong!

Ladies and gentlemen,

- A decade ago we were half way between the first and second phases of the World Summit on the Information Society, WSIS, and the progress we have made since then has been simply extraordinary.

- In the past ten years we have brought virtually all of humanity within reach of mobile cellular communications, and come close to fulfilling our dream of connecting the world.

- Being able to communicate is perhaps the very first challenge of a human being, and also the last – and we should be proud of the progress we have already made.

- Indeed, according to the latest forecasts from ITU, released just one week ago, there will be almost as many mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide as there are people by the end of the year, and there will be close to three billion people online.

- This is truly fantastic – but we still have far to go.

- Because even by the end of this year, two thirds of people in the developing world will still be offline, and without access to the most important tool we have ever seen in terms of improving global development, in terms of health, education, poverty reduction and so much more.

Distinguished delegates,

- As you know, I am a firm believer in the power of the WSIS process to do real good in this regard, and we are very much looking forward to the WSIS+10 High Level Event, which is being held here in Geneva, from 10 to 13 June, with pre-events being held on Monday 9 June.

- This will be an extended version of the annual WSIS Forum, and will of course be open to all stakeholders, and I look forward to seeing very many of you there.

- The event will provide the necessary vision for the way forward beyond 2015; and the commitment to ensure that ICTs remain high on the political agenda over the next decade.

- The WSIS+10 High-level Event is being coordinated by ITU and co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, with engagement from other UN Agencies, including FAO, ILO, ITC, UNDESA, UNEP, UNODC, UPU, UN Women, WMO, WFP, WIPO and UN Regional Commissions.

- The WSIS+10 High Level Event is expected to endorse two important outcome documents:

  - a 'WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS Outcomes';

  and

  - a 'WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015'.

- These Outcome Documents are, at present, being developed in an open and inclusive preparatory process, the WSIS+10 Multi-stakeholder Preparatory Platform, the MPP, which many of you have been taking part in.

- This preparatory process built on the outcomes of the ITU Regional Development Forums which were held in all six ITU regions last year; as well as deliberations at WSIS Forums (2012 and 2013); the WSIS+10 Visioning Challenge Initiative; the 2013 WSIS+10 Multi-stakeholder Meeting in Paris; and more than 450 multi-stakeholder contributions.

- We held the fourth physical meeting last month, where we completed the first reading of the Statement and built consensus on the way forward for the Action lines in the Vision.

- The next meeting will be held from 28 to 31 May at WIPO, whose generous hosting of this meeting is a clear example of the commitment by other UN agencies to this process. I have full confidence that this next meeting will deliver the final consensus documents to be endorsed at the High-level Event in June.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The WSIS+10 High Level Event will build on two tracks: the High-Level Track, consisting of formal statements, handing over of prizes, and endorsement of the Outcome Documents; and the Forum Track.

- Building on the tradition of annual WSIS Forum meetings in May, the Forum track's format and thematic focus are the result of an open consultation process with the involvement of all WSIS Stakeholders.

- This year we received more than 120 requests for workshops on diverse topics – and I am happy to inform you that there has been an increase in contributions by all Stakeholder types this year,

with the highest number of contributions coming from Civil Society.

- Many of you have already coordinated your workshop requests and the draft agenda is online for your reference.

- The High-Level Event will review the WSIS Outcomes (2003 and 2005) related to the WSIS Action Lines with the view of developing proposals on a new vision beyond 2015, potentially including new targets.

- In this context, last week, I had a meeting with UN Women here in Geneva, and we agreed that it is very important to reinforce the importance of gender issues in the implementation framework of WSIS beyond 2015, and potentially having a special action

line on gender.

- During this important event we will also celebrate two important anniversaries:

  - Ten years of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development;

  and

  - Ten years of the WSIS Stocktaking Process, which has attracted more than 30 thousand partners, and became a unique global repository for reporting on ICT-related projects related to the implementation of WSIS.

Distinguished delegates,

- As many of you will know, the sixth ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference, WTDC-14, recently reaffirmed the global commitment to ICTs as an enabler of sustainable development.

- WTDC-14 adopted the Dubai Action Plan of the ITU Development Sector as well as series of strategic resolutions, including resolutions on ICT infrastructure, cybersecurity and an enabling environment – areas where ITU plays the role of sole facilitator within the WSIS framework.

- The WTDC outcomes, which are fully-aligned with the objectives of the WSIS Action Lines, will pave the way towards a series of impact-oriented activities to be implemented beyond 2015.

- Let me therefore close these remarks by saying how much I look forward to seeing you all at the WSIS+10 High-Level Event next month – and by extending our sincere thank you to all the WSIS Stakeholders that have contributed towards the WSIS Fund in Trust 2014 for defraying the costs of the event.

- We are very grateful to the Governments of Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Oman, Qatar, Rwanda, UAE and Switzerland, as well as to INTEL as the Private Sector strategic partner, and ISOC and IFIP as Contributing Partners.

- Thank you for contributing towards the success of this event.

And thank you for your attention.

1,400 words