UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twentieth session
Geneva, 8-12 May 2017

Opening Ceremony
Item 1: Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Statement submitted by

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Palais des Nations

Speech by:

Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary- General, ITU

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- ITU, being the UN Agency for the ICTs, plays an important role in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the important contribution that ICTs can make to delivering on the aspirational, transformational, and universal targets of the post-2015 framework and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- To this end ITU is carrying out significant number of actions reported to the CSTD through the special annual report on ITU Contribution to the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes. 2016 edition has been submitted to the secretariat and I encourage you all to refer to it during your deliberations. Each activity reported is linked to the SDGs to provide a clear linkage of the impact generated on the SDGs. In addition ITU carried our mapping exercise linking all our goals, outputs and actions to the SDGs. I also encourage you to refer to our new SDG Mapping tool showing how ITU contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- In line with the call of UNGA for a close alignment between WSIS and SDG processes, ITU membership resolved to use the WSIS framework as the foundation through which ITU helps achieve the 2030 Agenda. We are working at the global, regional and national level, at the same time connecting the dots to ensure that the ICT community works hand in hand with the other sectors for accelerating the implementation on the ground.

- ITU-led WSIS activities, including WSIS Forum, WSIS Stocktaking, WSIS Prizes have been aligned to the SDGs. Also the necessary links have been established with the UN regional economic commissions and regional offices of the UN agencies facilitating the WSIS Action Lines.

- ITU continues to coordinate the WSIS Action Lines and SDG Matrix (www.wsis.org/sdgs), a tool developed by a number of United Nations agencies to map how ICTs may contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. The Matrix serves as an easy reference for stakeholders engaged in shaping the future of both the SDGs and the WSIS processes beyond 2015 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- The WSIS Stocktaking process continues collecting information on actions, projects, programmes, and initiatives implemented by all stakeholders related to WSIS and the SDGs, while providing concrete proof of impact of particular WSIS Action Lines on SDGs, transforming the WSIS-SDG Matrix into an evidence-based policy guide for all WSIS Stakeholders. Up to now, WSIS Stocktaking portal, with more than 300.000 registered stakeholders remains a unique platform for ICT4SDG projects.

- The WSIS Forum 2017 will be held from 12 to 16 June in Geneva with the aim of enhancing cooperation, partnership, innovation, exchange of experiences and good practices in ICTs for the sustainable development. We expect more than 2500 stakeholders from over 160 countries, including more than 200 ministers, ambassadors, heads of international bodies, industry leaders and high level representatives from the civil society and academia.

- WSIS Forum is now clearly the world's leading ICTs for sustainable development (ICT4SDG) event. Also, the WSIS Forum builds upon the WSIS-SDG Matrix, linking its more than 200 multistakeholder workshops (and their outcomes) to the SDGs.

- During the Forum, the WSIS Prizes 2017 will be awarded to 17 winners and I sincerely thank all those that submitted projects – both for the WSIS Prizes and for the WSIS Stocktaking Database. However, already today, I have the pleasured to announce that we will be releasing by the end of the day the list of 90 WSIS champions, nominated through international community, casting more than 1 million votes, assessing the projects. Please let me use this opportunity to congratulate the Champions and invite them all to the WSIS Forum 2017.

- As you are aware the agenda and programme of the WSIS Forum is built through an open consultation process and many of you, WSIS Stakeholders, are involved in it. I would like to thank everyone for your dedication and commitment towards this multistakeholder process.

- In order to ensure the widest participation and inclusiveness the Open Consultation Process was structured in six phases that began in September last year.

- The many submissions received show the energy and commitment towards the Forum - over 200 contributions from Stakeholders worldwide during online discussions, face-to-face meetings and direct official submissions, all in the spirit of the theme of this year's event: ***Information and Knowledge Societies for Sustainable Development Goals.***

- It is encouraging to note a substantial increase in the number of submissions this year. The highest number of submissions (32%) were from civil society organizations, and there was a substantial increase in the number from the private sector, which is also organising 8 different workshops during the Forum.

- I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the confirmed partners of the WSIS Forum 2017: Government of Japan; Government of Poland; Government of Philippines; Government of Rwanda; Government of Switzerland; GeSI; Veon; ICANN; ISOC; IFIP; CMAI; TEMA India and Swiss Engineering. WSIS Forum relies entirely on voluntary contributions and so we are very grateful for this support and would encourage others to contribute.

- This year is particular. We have the WSIS Forum after the CSTD session, nevertheless the outcomes of the Forum can be used during the ECOSOC session and I encourage you all to do so. It will also be an important contribution to the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF), where the outcome will be submitted as a multistakeholder contribution.

- Before I close on behalf of ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD and many other UN agencies, passionately working on the success of the WSIS Forum, let me reiterate the invitation.

- We look forward to welcoming and hosting you at the ITU during the WSIS Forum in June.

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