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**High-level roundtable on “The impact of rapid technological change on
sustainable development”**

Statement submitted by

International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

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ITU STATEMENT

Commission on Science and Technology for Development, twenty-second session

Item 3

Science and Technology for Development

High-level roundtable on “The impact of rapid technological change on sustainable development”

14th May 2019

As the lead UN agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) we appreciate this agenda item focusing on rapid technological change.

Mobile is one of the most far-reaching technologies in history, and it has developed more rapidly than any other technology in history.

It is having a significant impact on the economy. According to GSMA, mobile technologies and services generated 4.5% of GDP globally in 2017, a contribution that amounted to \$3.6 trillion of economic value added.

By 2022, this contribution should reach \$4.6 trillion.

And this is only the beginning.

Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT) and 5G are changing our economies at warp speed and scale.

New research from Huawei and Oxford Economics shows that AI alone could almost double the value of the global digital economy to \$23 trillion by 2025 from \$12.9 trillion in 2017.

The question then becomes, who will benefit from this digital transformation?

As we speak, half of the world's population is still not using the Internet, let alone the new technologies that I just mentioned.

The risk is that if not managed properly, the wave of technological change might in fact deepen the inequalities between the digital "haves" and the "have-nots."

I should add that the digital divide itself has many faces. There are gaps in coverage, speed and affordability, gaps between developing and developed nations, between cities and villages, and even between men and women online.

Look at what's happening in developing and least-developed countries. This is extremely concerning, especially when we know that the lack of adequate infrastructure and access to ICTs for women and girls limits their educational opportunities and access to labour markets.

At ITU, we are working hard on all these fronts, seeking to promote investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and local content in local languages. Because efforts to improve access connectivity will be undermined if people cannot afford the service, don't understand it, don't trust it, or see no benefit to it.

And because to succeed in leveraging the opportunities of the digital economy, we all need to succeed in leaving no one behind.