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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 submitted by

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Opening Remarks

ITU Deputy Secretary-General, Malcolm Johnson

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Thank you Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to join the 23rd CSTD session and I would like to thank UNCTAD for inviting me to provide updates on the WSIS implementation process.

The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated the power and promise of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Never before has there been so much reliance, appreciation and emphasis placed on the important role and capacity of ICTs. During lockdown, ICTs have given billions of people around the world the ability to continue their work, studies, care of others and remain connected to loved ones.

But not all have been able to benefit. Let's remember that 3.6 billion people around the world are still not connected to the Internet. The increased awareness of the importance of being connecting, brought about by the Covid-19 crisis will, I believe, make it sooner rather than later that everyone, everywhere is connected. It is now more urgent than ever before that we leverage ICTs

to connect everyone everywhere and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We must also recognize the importance of the WSIS Action Lines as a key framework for progress on the achievement of SDGs. ITU has been working with all WSIS Stakeholders to strengthen the alignment of the WSIS Process with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have submitted contributions on the WSIS implementation activities to the UN High-Level Political Forum 2020 and will also be holding a related side-event during HLPF in collaboration with UNGIS members and Saudi Arabia. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate UNCTAD for taking over the Chair of the **UNGIS** and look forward to collaborating with UNCTAD and the other UNGIS members to ensure good collaboration on the use of ICTs for achieving the SDGs.

The WSIS Forum 2020 Open Consultation Process received more than 300 submissions from stakeholders worldwide and resulted in the draft agenda and programme in line with the spirit of the theme of this year's event which is: *Fostering digital transformation and global partnerships: WSIS Action Lines for achieving SDGs.*

In April, we initiated the very successful Virtual WSIS TalkX highlighting best practice responses to COVID-19 using ICTs. They have provided a platform for information sharing, partnerships and impactful collaboration.

Based on extensive consultation with our co-organisers, the other UN organisations involved as well as our sponsors, we are hosting the WSIS Forum 2020 in a virtual format starting on **22 June onwards** to a final week during **7-10 September 2020**. The **WSIS Prizes 2020** will be awarded on 7 September. Details of the programme are already online. The daily events will run from 1200-1500 Geneva time. We are also encouraging regional workshops targeted towards a regional audience to be conducted in the appropriate UN official language at a time more suitable to the region.

A plurality of voices and ideas is the very essence of the WSIS community and the WSIS Process which is why the WSIS Forum has developed into the leading multi-stakeholder event addressing ICT for development worldwide. This unprececedenred situation and the resulting virtual programme, gives us

an opportunity to further increase participation and make WSIS Forum even more inclusive.

ITU is working in close collaboration with all the five **UN Regional Commissions** towards this strengthened focus on implementation of WSIS Action Lines and its alignment with 2030 Agenda at the regional level. In the upcoming months, the WSIS Regional Review in Asia-Pacific will be organized by UN ESCAP and in a Latin America Regional Review by UN ECLAC.

The **WSIS Stocktaking**, the international repository of good practices has more than 13,000 entries. It plays a crucial role in understanding how ICTs are contributing to economic, social, and environmentally sustainable development around the world. The global WSIS Stocktaking 2020 Report, and the six Regional WSIS Stocktaking Reports, will be launched during the WSIS Forum 2020 in September. Since the world was struck by the Covid-19 pandemic, this online platform has been collecting ICT projects and activities that can assist stakeholders meet the challenges it presents in their everyday life and work. So far, over 200 submissions have been received.

Finally, in response to the WSIS call for countries and international organisations to develop appropriate indicators and produce official statistics to monitor the Information Society, particularly in developing countries, The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which was established in 2004, presented its report to the 51st Session of the UN Statistical Commission during 3-6 March 2020. The report introduced new indicators to reflect the latest developments in ICT adoption and use by households and individuals. It was welcomed by the UNSC which endorsed the thematic list and expressed its support to the work of the Partnership.

Mr Chairman, I would like to finish by thanking all participants for your commitment and support to WSIS Forum and I look forward to welcoming you to the Virtual WSIS Forum 2020!

831 Words.