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Opening Session

Address by

Mr. Malcolm Johnson
Deputy Secretary-General
International Telecommunication Union

Remarks by ITU Deputy Secretary-General Malcolm Johnson at the twenty-fifth annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development

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Good afternoon and thank you to UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan for the opportunity to address the twenty-fifth annual session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

If I may, I would like to start with a few words about the war in Ukraine. As the UN specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), ITU deplores the widespread destruction of critical infrastructure, failure of telecom services and mobile phone outages that have occurred across Ukraine since the beginning of the war.[i] Last week, the ITU Council adopted a resolution on "Assistance and support to Ukraine for rebuilding their telecommunication sector". As the war goes on, ITU echoes United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres' call for the conflict to stop now and reaffirms the importance of telecommunications and ICTs for peace and development.

Turning to the work of the Commission, I commend Secretary-General Grynspan for her recent report entitled "Industry 4.0 for inclusive development", which is one of the priority themes before us today together with "Science, technology and innovation for sustainable urban development in a post-pandemic world".[ii] Both themes are synonymous with advances in emerging digital technologies in fields from 5G to AI to the Internet of Things—fields where the role of ITU is central. In this, as in everything else, ITU's objective is to ensure that all countries can benefit from this new wave of technological change equally and that no one is left behind. As the report points out, however, most firms in developing countries are not ready to use such technologies. Changing this will require forging and strengthening partnerships and international collaboration.[iii]

The essence of the WSIS Process is to cultivate and foster dialogue and partnerships among different stakeholders to improve the lives of people everywhere through ICTs. During our annual Council meeting last week, ITU Member States reiterated their support for ITU's leading role in this process, highlighting the importance of the WSIS Action Lines in advancing the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) beyond 2025. ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao presented his roadmap on the 20-year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society and WSIS beyond 2025. This includes mechanisms and activities ranging from the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) to the WSIS Forum. I take this opportunity to encourage you to participate in this year's Forum, which was launched two weeks ago and will culminate with the final week to be held in Geneva from 30 May to 3 June.

As we look to the role of WSIS beyond 2025, ITU is more committed than ever to working closely with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, UNESCO, UNDP and the more than 30 sister UN agencies engaged in the WSIS+20 Review Process to implement the WSIS outcomes and the SDGs.

2022 is an important year for ITU, with three of our major conferences taking place in the span of just a few months. The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly concluded earlier this month, highlighting how vital digital technical standards are to creating a more prosperous, sustainable and inclusive future for all. Our World Telecommunication Development Conference will be held in Kigali, Rwanda in June, followed in September by ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference, our highest policy making body.

We have a window before us to build back better and make lasting change. ICTs are essential to socio-economic sustainable development and ITU is in the business to collaborate with everyone

to make sure we achieve this. I call on you to work with us to continue to align the WSIS process with the SDGs—and to fulfil the vision outlined by WSIS almost 20 years ago of an Information Society where everyone can benefit from the opportunities that ICTs can offer.

I wish you all a very successful session.

Thank you.

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[i] Source: ITU. Multi-country contribution - Implementation of UNGA Resolution from 2 March 2022 on "Aggression against Ukraine". C22/81(Rev.2). 24 March 2022. https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-C-0081/en

[ii] Source: UNCTAD. Commission on Science and Technology for Development, twenty-fifth session. 28 March-01 April 2022. https://unctad.org/meeting/commission-science-and-technology-development-twenty-fifth-session

[iii] Source: UNCTAD. Industry 4.0 for inclusive development. 17 January 2022. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecn162022d2_en.pdf