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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 by

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Panel: 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.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased and honored to be here with you today and take part of this panel in order to share with you some insights on progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with a particular focus on the Tunisian case.

As you may know, in 2005, Tunisia had the privilege to host the second phase of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

In addition to the Tunis Commitment, the Tunis phase produced the Tunis Agenda, which provided a framework for the implementation of WSIS outcomes beyond the summit.

The agenda addressed various issues, including internet governance, financing mechanisms for ICT development, capacity building, and follow-up and implementation mechanisms.

The main outcomes of the two phases of the WSIS provided a roadmap for leveraging ICTs to promote sustainable development, bridge the

digital divide, and foster international cooperation in the information society.

Even though these outcomes were produced 19 years ago, they continue to guide efforts to harness the transformative potential of ICTs for the benefit of all.

But since that time, Information and Communications Technologies have drastically evolved and innovative trends including Artificial Intelligence, new generations of communication technologies, blockchain, and Internet of things have actually the potential to both enable and hinder the realisation of the WSIS vision towards the promotion of sustainable development and the closure of the digital divide.

From one side, the realisation of the WSIS vision is enabled by:

- **Advancements in connectivity** which can enhance access to ICTs, particularly in underserved and remote areas allowing a greater participation in the digital economy and access to online education, healthcare, and government services,
- **The development of Artificial Intelligence** which can empower various sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and governance, contributing to sustainable development goals,
- **Digital inclusion initiatives** such as affordable access to ICT devices, capacity building and digital skills development which can help bridge the digital divide and ensure that marginalized communities benefit from ICTs,
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration** consisting of collaboration among governments, academia, civil society, the private sector,

and international organizations which is essential for advancing the WSIS vision.

From the other side, Hindrances that prevent the achievement of the WSIS outcome are:

- First, **the technological and access divide**, which can be widened if the access to AI, connectivity solutions and expertise remain unequal,
- Second **ethical concerns of AI** which are mainly related to privacy, bias, and accountability,
- Then, **privacy and security concerns** as emerging technologies undermine trust in the digital ecosystem and slow down progress towards the WSIS goal of building a secure and trustworthy information society,
- And **finally, policy and regulation** which can be outpaced by the rapid technological advancements raising challenges for governance and accountability.

Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be considered, along with the WSIS roadmap, as a catalyst for achieving the broader goals of sustainable development, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tunisia strongly believes that effectively tackling the opportunities and challenges presented by digital ubiquity necessitates the involvement of every nation, all stakeholders, and every sector.

The significance of these challenges is heightened in developing countries due to several factors including infrastructure gaps, economic disparities, education and literacy levels, regulatory frameworks and limited access to financing.

This is why we are convinced that greater efforts are required in these countries in addressing these challenges. This is crucial to ensure they have equal opportunities as developed nations in progressing towards fulfilling both WSIS objectives and sustainable development goals meant to enable universal and sustainable digital transformation.

Since the adoption of the WSIS action lines in 2005, Tunisia made the development of its digital economy one of its top priorities has and made several achievements towards the realisation of WSIS outcomes:

- Multi stakeholder cooperation in shaping Internet governance policies and addressing pertinent issues has been comprehensively instituted at the national level through the establishment of the national Internet Governance Forum (IGF) since 2012. We are convinced that this approach continues to be the most appropriate one,
- We recognize that AI is a powerful tool that enables the achievement of the WISIS vision and we are aware that it should be applied responsibly, in a safe and secure manner while preserving privacy and advancing sustainability. A national AI strategy is being prepared based on collaborative approach in order to implement these principles,
- We believe that tracking the realisation and implementation of the outcomes of the WIIS through appropriate indicators is essential in order to measure progress,

This is why Tunisia is actively involved in the work of international institutions on such indicators such as ITU and UNESCO through the direct contribution to the development of Internet universality indicators which provide a framework for assessing national Internet environments, with regard to, openness, accessibility and multi-stakeholder participation,

- Being aware of the importance of digital transformation and the associated risks, particularly cybersecurity, Tunisia has updated its cybersecurity legislation and has set up a framework for the certification of cloud providers, including the Governmental-cloud and National-cloud providers in order to promote secure and resilient access to infrastructures. Tunisia has also officially joined the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime on Friday, March 8, becoming the 70th state to do so.
- In term of digital and e-government services, Tunisia made significant progress in making governmental service available online for every citizen and has launched the “Mobile ID” program in 2022 which is the national electronic identity on mobiles that will ensure a secure and rapid access to administrative services.

Finally, we believe that sustaining and improving a framework of global cooperation among nations led by international relevant organizations and providing adequate support for developing countries are the key for fulfilling the WSIS outcomes and the sustainable development goals as outlined in the 2030 agenda.

Thank you for your attention.