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Plenary on Item 3: Beyond the curve: UNCTAD and new patterns of growth for trade and development

Speaker: ITU

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60TH SESSION OF THE UNCTAD TRADE & DEVELOPMENT BOARD

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT - BEYOND THE CURVE: UNCTAD AND NEW PATTERNS FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

15.00, MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2013
GENEVA SWITZERLAND

KEYNOTE SPEECH

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Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

. It is a tremendous honour and a real pleasure to be here with you in Geneva today for the High-Level Segment of the 60th Session of UNCTAD's Trade & Development Board.

- Let me first congratulate the new Secretary-General, Mukhisa Kituyi, who took up office just two weeks ago.
- And let me take this opportunity to reiterate what I said when we met earlier in the summer:
  - Firstly, that we have every confidence that the long-standing and very close relationship between ITU and UNCTAD will continue to flourish and blossom under your new leadership;
  - And secondly, that we all recognize the clear competencies of CSTD, ITU and UNCTAD, in terms of our separate, but coordinated and complementary roles.

Ladies and gentlemen

- Let me welcome this opportunity to be able to discuss the role of information and communication technologies – ICTs – in an inclusive and innovative services sector which spurs on both growth and development.

- It is clear that the relationship between the ICT sector and the services sector is critical for both sectors – and indeed the services sector played a leading role in the adoption of ICTs. Traditionally, the services sector was one of the main purchasers of ICT equipment and services. At the same time it has been significantly transformed by ICTs in terms of both performance and quality improvements – making it a win-win relationship.

- We all know that sectors such as finance and business services lead in terms of ICT investments. In return, ICT exposes these services to competition and leads them to innovate to become more competitive in turn, and thereby more tradable.
- ICT continues to transform the services sector. The ongoing diffusion of ICTs and a new wave of ICT applications enabled by broadband, mobile phones and sensor networks are spreading rapidly throughout the economy and creating more inclusive, innovative and high-impact services. This opens up windows for innovation and trade opportunities for both developed and developing countries.

- For example, the increasing pressures on many countries' health systems from an ageing population, increased rates of chronic disease, and health workforce challenges, mean it is critical to consider opportunities to deliver high-quality services more effectively and efficiently using the power of ICTs.

- We can already see many areas where ICTs – and in particular m-health – are already making a big difference, and we expect to see extraordinary progress, revolutionary progress, in the years ahead.

- It is clear, for example, that we shall continue to see an increasingly rapid move from narrow-band to ever more

data-centric and real-time applications, especially on mobile devices.

- Already, there are more than three times as many mobile broadband subscriptions as fixed broadband subscriptions, and by the end of this year ITU forecasts that there will be 2.1 billion mobile broadband subscriptions – making mobile broadband the fastest-growing technology in human history.

- Mobile broadband will allow some health services – notably consultation and diagnosis – which were previously available only in clinics or hospitals, to become available in the home, on-demand, through affordable low-tech solutions.

- This will all be facilitated by the move to next-generation all-IP networks and devices.
- Already, most mobile devices have a camera included. So with all-IP networks, this allows for free, or ultra-low cost, real-time video-conferencing – from the home, or even from the ambulance.
- Across every sector we will also see a massive proliferation in machine-to-machine communications, and we will see the 'Internet of Things' become a reality – with current forecasts predicting over 50 billion interconnected devices by the year 2020.

cloud platform. Ubiquitous global access to the best-in-class learning materials will become a reality for millions of new learners.

- Globally, manufacturing increasingly depends on the very short supply chain management processes that only the Internet can make possible.
- The increasing availability of ubiquitous high-speed broadband connections and the establishment of an effective online presence will allow businesses – and particularly small businesses, and not-for-profit organizations – to participate in a global marketplace.
- We are also seeing unprecedented collaboration online when it comes to research and development.

- The innovative use of ICTs will also play a crucial role in ensuring the world's seven billion people have affordable and equitable access to adequate food supplies.
- This is true at every step of the process – from delivering the right information to farmers; to helping them improve yields and prices; to improving supply chain efficiencies; to ensuring that consumers understand nutritional needs, both for themselves and for their children.
- Through smart grids, environmental sensors, intelligent transport systems, dematerialization and the digitalization of goods and services, and new ways of improving energy efficiency,

we can help drive the transition to a low carbon economy, while better adapting to the effects of climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- We should not forget, however, that as we come into 2014, two thirds of people in developing countries – and almost 92% of people in LDCs – will still not have any access to the Internet at all.
- This means that even with the very rapid growth of new technologies such as mobile broadband we still risk creating a world of Internet rich and Internet poor; a world where the new broadband divide is even more worrying than the digital divide we had before near-ubiquitous mobile phones.

- This is why ITU and UNESCO set up the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in 2010 – to encourage governments to implement national broadband plans and to increase access to broadband applications and services.
- Broadband has the power to radically transform society and to deliver sustainable social and economic progress – through an environment of constant innovation and a wealth of job creation opportunities.
- This is why broadband networks must be considered, in the 21st century, as basic infrastructure, just like roads, railways, water and power networks.

- In a more populous, ageing world, broadband will be vital in helping to deliver essential services such as health, education and good government.
- We must therefore work hard to ensure that everyone – wherever they live, and whatever their circumstances – has access to the benefits of broadband Internet.
- This is not just about delivering connectivity for connectivity's sake – or even about giving people access to the undoubted benefits of social communications.
- There are those who argue that we do not need high-end technology to solve the world's most pressing issues – such as hunger and poverty –