

WSIS – High level Dialogue

Virtual event

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Opening Remarks

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be speaking to you in this High-Level Dialogue on the date in which we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Let us look back to 2005.

At that time, Internet access to homes was provided mostly by the telephone network either through an analog dial-up connection or through a digital subscriber line. Cable modem was picking up and Fiber to the home and mobile broadband connections were only just beginning.

In fact, in 2005 there were only 220 million fixed-broadband subscriptions, of which most [67%] were in the developed world. Moreover, 3G was only starting to be deployed.

Back then, representatives from all countries gathered in Tunis in the WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society) to reaffirm their desire to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, based on the purpose of multilateralism, so that people could use information and communication technologies to achieve what were then called the Millennium Development Goals.

From 2005 to the present date, fixed-broadband connections have increased five-fold, while mobile-broadband connections such as 3G and 4G have

increased 23 times. Today there are over 6.3 billion active mobile broadband subscriptions and over 53% of the world's population has access to the Internet.

With the COVID-19 crisis we have witnessed the impact of being connected more than ever before. According to the world bank, 294 billion emails are sent every day, and 65 billion WhatsApp messages, 5 billion searches and the equivalent of 200 million DVDs of data are created daily.

These figures show the tremendous expansion of the information and communication technologies and the great progress of the multi-stakeholder implementation of the WSIS Action Lines and their strengthened alignment with the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs).

I am very pleased to witness this progress as I have been associated with the WSIS Process since its inception, also in my previous role as Chief of the Policies and Strategies Department in the BDT, where I was directly involved in the implementation of the core WSIS Action Lines, where the ITU is a lead facilitator. In particular, Action Line C2 on ICT Infrastructure, Action Line C5 on Cybersecurity, and Action Line C6 on Enabling environment.

In my current role as Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau, I experience first-hand how international cooperation is key to implement the WSIS Plan of Action.

In fact, the collaboration between administrations, service providers, manufacturers, academia and standardization bodies is what allows us to agree upon global radiocommunication regulations and standards that are then incorporated by countries throughout the world.

Just recently, in the end of 2019, all stakeholders gathered in Egypt during the ITU World Radiocommunication Conference, the WRC, and revised the Radio Regulations. The Conference improved and updated the international treaty that governs the use of radio-frequency spectrum and satellite-orbits.

This regulatory framework ensures that radiocommunication services can coexist and provides the stability required to attract investments and enable the exponential growth of telecommunications and ICTs.

Thus, while we acknowledge the advancements attained during the last 15 years, the Radiocommunications Sector of the ITU is working relentlessly to:

- First of all, ensure all people are connected, reducing the digital divide, empowering women and girls, and enabling access to e-learning, e-employment and e-health;
- Secondly, to ensure things and industries are connected, enabling e-agriculture, e-business, and the development of the industry 4.0; and
- Lastly, to ensure ICTs are used to for the sustainability of the planet, enabling e-environment.

WRC-19 opened the path for further innovation in the telecommunications and ICTs. New applications such as high-altitude platforms and non-geostationary satellite constellations promise to connect the unconnected and new 5G applications promise to increase the efficiency of industries. In addition, the conference protected the science services to ensure we can continue using satellites to monitor the Earth and obtain invaluable information from the land, the sea, and the atmosphere.

Another very important decision taken by the Conference and in line with the WSIS Action Plan was the approval of a Gender Declaration. This declaration brings to the forefront the need to support the participation and the leadership of women that act in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

I look forward to continuing working with all WSIS stakeholders to ensure the digital transformation of society and the best use of ICTs towards achieving the UN digital sustainable development goals.

Thank you very much.