

**Mr Houlin ZHAO, Secretary-General, ITU**

**Budapest, Hungary**

**11 October 2015**

Mr Chairman,

Mr Vice-Chair,

Distinguished Advisory Board Members of the Smart Sustainable Development Model Initiative,

Good morning.

I am pleased to welcome you here in Budapest on the occasion of the third Advisory Board meeting of the Smart Sustainable Development Model (SSDM) Initiative. I would like to start by thanking all of you for being here, for your commitment and hard work.

Dear Colleagues,

Disasters affect each one of us. It respects no boundaries and affects every person and every country be it a developing or a developed country. Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries remain the most vulnerable among us.

It is not enough to deploy ICT emergency equipment and wait for another disaster to strike. Furthermore, we must remember that emergency telecommunication equipment is only the short term solution. The long-term solutions including early warning systems among many are key to sustainability, reducing loss of lives and economic losses. When this is linked to the provision of social and economic services, then the outcomes are even greater. This is why the work you are doing is very important.

I strongly believe that better preparedness on resilience is important for countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all know, the UN General Assembly in New York in September endorsed and approved the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 11.5 relates directly to the work of this Advisory Board for

SSDM. Allow me to read. “By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations”. I want to congratulate Brahim Sanou and this Board that showed vision to already start work that will certainly contribute to efforts towards the attainment of the SDGs during the next 15 years.

I know that you have a tight agenda before you. Let me conclude by stating that Brahim and your Board have all my support and I follow your great work quite closely. I look forward to reading your upcoming report that I understand will be published soon, and also to the progress that you will continue to make in your future work.

I, therefore, thank all Board members, Working Group Leaders, and Task Force Leaders, the Vice-Chair and the Chairman for your commitment to the work of this initiative.

I thank you.

Word Count: 446