|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-17 for Europe (RPM-EUR)**  | P:\SUP\Logos\Post-150th Anniv\ITU-logo-UNblue.jpg |
| **Vilnius, Lithuania, 27-28 April 2017** |
|  |  |
|  | **Document** **RPM-EUR17/****INF/10-E** |
| **26 April 2017** |
| **English only** |
|  |
| **Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau** |
| REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR EUROPESUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary:**This document contains the summary of discussions during the ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe that took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 26 April 2017, which preceded the Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-17 for Europe.**Expected results:**N/A**References:**N/A |

**Background**

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Europe Region (RDF-EUR) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania on 26 April 2017 at the kind invitation of the Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania, in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania (MoTC).

The Forum was held on the eve of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017 (WTDC-17) for the Europe Region (RPM-EUR). The RDF-EUR main objective was to discuss the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their desired impact on developing countries in the Europe Region particularly in the areas of ICT infrastructure development, trust and confidence in the use of ICTs, digital inclusion, innovation and multistakeholder partnerships. The Forum also highlighted the key areas of ICT development beyond 2017 contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. The outcome is being submitted as an information document to the RPM-EUR.

The meeting was attended by 84 participants including 48 represeting 20 Member States, 3 Sector Members, 7 Observer Member States and 1 Observer Sector Member, 2 from United Nations and its specialized agencies, 11 guest participants. The list of participants can be found [here](https://www.itu.int/md/D14-RPMEUR-ADM-0003/en). This report provides an overview of the issues discussed, as well as the issues identified during the course of the Forum. The agenda and this report can be found on the [event webpage.](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-EUR/Pages/default.aspx)

**Opening Ceremony**

The opening remarks were provided by the following high-level speakers:

* H.E. Mr Ričardas Degutis, Vice Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania (MoTC)
* Mr Brahima Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union
* Mr Manuel da Costa Cabral, Chairman, Com-ITU of CEPT (The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations)

***H.E Mr Ričardas Degutis*** welcomed all participants to RDF-EUR, noting that the theme of this RDF: “ICTs for Sustainable Development” is very timely as we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals known as SDGs.

He emphasized the importance of ICT for development and its outreach as key mechanism to ensure equitable access to services for citizens. All people have a right to use ICTs and its related content in their unique or most comfortable way. 5G, data economy, Internet of Things, bid data, trust, inclusion, and security topics are on the cutting edge of the ICT ecosystem.

He underlined Lithuania’s commitment to the implementation of the SDGs and support to ITU, noting the role that the RDF plays in providing a high level platform for multi-stakeholder discussions.

**Mr Brahima Sanou** thanked the government of Lithuania represented by H.E Ričardas Degutis and welcomed the High level delegates present.

He noted that as we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), policy makers, regulators, private sector, development partners and all stakeholders of the ICT ecosystem need more than ever to establish an inclusive, multistakeholder and collaborative dialogue to achieve socio-economic development.

He emphasized the key role of ICT as one of the solutions to achieve SDGs, rather than a problem. He highlighted the need of raising awareness on the potential of ICTs as catalysts and enabler for the SDGs related processes, and expressed his full support as Director of the ITU Development Bureau toward fostering dialogue within the international community on the role played by the ICTs. He furthermore stressed the importance to reach out to the community, in order to convey a clear message about the need to collaborate and cooperate toward the attainment of the SDGs.

He finally shared with the RDF how ITU and in particular the BDT, is facilitating such dialogue, as well as undertaking initiatives at national, regional and international levels on various priority areas such as mHealth, Child Online Protection, and e-agriculture.

***Mr Manuel da Costa Cabral*** commended ITU for putting ICTs at the center of SDGs and congratulated the Government of Lithuania for providing a platform dialogue. He highlighted that development is a priority for European Countries and affirmed that over half of all development aid comes from European Countries, making Europe collectively the world's largest aid donor, adding that most of this aid goes to low-income and least developed countries.

He carried on mentioning that within the ITU Development Sector, there is an opportunity to work for cooperation and solidarity in the delivery of technical assistance and in the improvement of telecommunication and ICT equipment and networks in developing countries.

He concluded that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets specific targets and ICTs act as an accelerator and enabler for many, if not all of the SDGs, and therefore there is the opportunity to leave the footprint in an area which is key to the sustainable development and growth as well as the reduction of inequalities.

**The following are highlights of each of the sessions.**

The presentations of all speakers can be found on the [event webpage](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-EUR/Pages/default.aspx)

**Session 1: Fostering Development of ICT Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (SDG 9 & 7 / WSIS AL C2, C6, C7)**

This session focused on the initiatives undertaken at the regional level to address the development of broadband access and adoption of broadband as well as spectrum management and transition to digital broadcasting. It highlighted the importance of broadband infrastructure development and tracking, the opportunities of new technologies and network developments, and the need for regional and sectoral cooperation and dialogue.

***Mr Jaroslaw Ponder***, ITU Area Representative, Europe, set the context of the session by providing an overview of the ongoing discussions on the post 2018 initiatives in the area of broadband development and presented the results achieved since the last WTDC. In this context, he focused on the implementation of current Regional Initiatives on broadband access and adoption, including in the areas of spectrum management and digital broadcasting, and provided an overview of workshops, training and projects in the region.

The Keynote address by ***Mr Alban Karapici***, Member of Council, Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP), Albania, highlighted the opportunities and challenges of driving broadband infrastructure by presenting some of the key broadband-related projects and activities in Albania. Mr Karapici discussed the opportunities of fixed and wireless networks, the convergence of telecommunication, and broadcasting services.

He highlighted the importance for policy makers to create the right regulatory frameworks to drive liberalization, provide incentives for investors and service providers, and to improve consumer choices. To this end, Albania is focusing on a number of projects to build backbone infrastructure. This includes regulatory measures that encourage the shared use of active and passive infrastructure, and non-telecommunication infrastructure from the water and energy sectors.

To drive developments, Albania monitors broadband deployments, including through market analysis and a database that provides operators with information on existing infrastructure. The keynote speaker highlighted the importance of spectrum management, to take advantage of the digital dividend spectrum, and to focus on bringing high-speed broadband networks and services to underserved and rural areas. The speaker also pointed to the importance of regional cooperation and referred to two twinning projects that Albania has with Poland and Slovenia, in the areas of infrastructure and Quality of Service.

***Mr Istvan Bozsoki***, Head of Telecommunication Networks and Spectrum Management Division ITU, gave an overview on the ITU Interactive Transmission Maps, which were launched in 2013, with the collaboration of ICT administrations, regulators and other stakeholders. Maps such as the UN, natural earth, submarine cables, world transmission links, population density, have been integrated and continued to be updated, for example in relation to fibre optic and satellites links.

The ITU Interactive Transmission Maps were launched in Europe with 92 operators and new operators are continuously being added. Features and layers such as graphical and interactivity information and ITU statistics will be included, to support with matters such as network planning.

***Ms Olga Van Zijverden*** of TUV Rheinland elaborated on the mapping of quality of services in Europe, which began in 2013 with the preparation of the first European wide mapping platform, based on data and existing initiatives in the region. Quality of services has been defined in Europe based on three categories: availability, provision and experience of the services.

In November 2017, the new portal www.broadband-mapping.eu will be launched. One of the main objectives of this mapping effort, has been the linkage to the ITU Strategic plan 2020-2023, by matching issues such as multi-disciplinary cooperation, facilitation of joint investments, elaboration of evidence based impact assessments and benchmarking connectivity to stimulate competition.

The lessons so far learned have highlighted two main challenges, such as the few and different methodologies to gather data and the diversity of collected values, which are trying to be addressed through different approaches. In the long term, this project wishes to trigger in the European region a harmonized evidence based data and value collection, in close collaboration with the ITU.

***Mr René Arnold***, Head of Department Markets and Perspectives, WIK, gave an overview of the relevant role of ICTs for the achievement of SDG 7 and its targets: affordable and clean energy, as well as its relation to SDG 13: climate action. The role of ICTs in the energy value chain through generation, operation, trading and retail, will be key for the achievements of these SDGs.

The European experience on ICT and energy cooperation has been implemented through the Horizon 2020 project, which is the most comprehensive collaboration in Europe so far between the ICT and energy sectors. The main outcome will be a decision making toolkit for both ICT and energy providers. Between the two sectors, some barriers have surfaced, mostly due to unclear regulatory frameworks and lack of trust and understanding. Several types of cooperation have been acknowledged between the ICT and energy providers, which might address the current challenges, such as network operation, infrastructure sharing and the elaboration of new products and services.

ITU has already been playing an important role in these cooperation efforts with the recent organization of a joint expert workshop held in February 2017 and the elaboration of a RDF draft working paper.

A regional approach in Roaming, Broadband Development and Digitization in South Eastern Europe, was provided by ***Mr Gazmend Turdiu***, Deputy Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Mr Turdiu highlighted that despite much progress that has been made in bridging the digital divide within the Europe region, the Western Balkan countries continue to lag behind in terms of ICT developments, in particular in terms of fixed broadband deployments and uptake.

He highlighted the increasing policy awareness that is driving an enabling environment, investments and also cooperation with the European neighbours. One of the key RCC initiatives to support the region’s digital transformation is to help reduce the cost of services, in particular in terms of roaming charges. To this end, RCC provides technical assistance, a forum for discussion, and fosters the cooperation between countries, and with operators. Through its work, it has increased awareness, and highlighted the benefits and impact of reducing roaming charges, in particular for consumers.

Besides supporting regional integration, the RCC also benefits from its close cooperation with the European Union. Mr Tudiu also highlighted that the development of broadband infrastructure is seen as a key priority in the region, not only by governments but increasingly also by people and businesses.

**Session 2: Building Resilience and Trust for Sustainable Development (SDG 9 / WSIS AL C5)**

This session emphasized on the initiatives undertaken at the regional level for building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

***Ms Rosheen Awotar-Mauree***, Programme Officer, Europe Coordination, gave an overview of the current context in preparation for the presentations by the panelists. She also shared with the participants the current work undertaken by the ITU Development Bureau on cybersecurity in the Europe Region, emphasizing on the role that ITU is playing in facilitating regional dialogue and disseminating good practices among Member States.

***Mr George Michaelides***, Commissioner, Officer of the Commissioner of Electronic Communications and Postal Regulation of Cyprus, presented recent activities and developments in his country. Highlighting recent statistics on the probability and impact of cyber-attacks, including on critical infrastructure, he discussed the pillars of a European cybersecurity strategy and aspects of the NIS Directive.

While giving an overview of Cyprus activities related to its government Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT), building a National CIRT, and the development of a National Cybersecurity Strategy, the speaker stressed the critical role of cooperation and trust between stakeholders, at the national, regional and international levels. The establishment of a stakeholder group for a Safe Internet for Children and of the Cyprus Cybercrime Center of Excellence are examples of valuable mechanisms that can facilitate cooperation, collaboration and awareness raising. In closing, he once again re-iterated that cooperation and trust, particularly between the public and private sectors, are key to addressing the complexity of cybersecurity.

A national approach on Child Online Protection was provided by ***Mr Ahmet Çubukcu*** ICT expert, Telecommunications Regulator of Turkey. The presentation focused on the activities undertaken by the Authority aimed at stressing the importance of raising awareness, basic knowledge on safe use of the Internet, and training.

He shared the main pillars of the national programme, including the establishment of Safer Internet Centre and Safer Internet Service, the conduct of regular events with private sector, and the continuous cooperation with national stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, in order to institutionalize the concept of knowledge building.

In her presentation on Platforms Fostering Regional Cooperation on COP and Cybersecurity, ***Ms Ewa Dziemidowicz*** of Empowering Children Foundation Poland, highlighted the current challenges emanating from the use of ICT, specifically Internet, for youth, such as Internet addiction and the dangers related to frequent exposure to the on-line environment.

In order to counter such risks, she shared the initiatives undertaken by the Foundation, some of them implemented together with the ITU on ways and means to reduce potential behavior that could endanger the online experience of youngsters. Such initiatives include a Youth Forum, a series of training programmes, as well as the dissemination of guidelines in the local language.

***Dr Laurent Chrzanovski*** from the Swiss Web Academy, Romania, covered the topic of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in cybersecurity. He highlighted some of the challenges facing the many PPPs recently established, namely competing interests within the parties and redundancy and overlap on the topics and issues covered by the PPPs, and compared the role of the state vs. non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

He also highlighted that the most successful PPPs were those addressing a focused political need. He closed by highlighting the success of the European Public-Private Dialogue Platform and of a Cybersecurity Trends publication initiated in Romania and being translated in an increasing number of European countries.

***Prof Michael Goldsmith***, Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre, Oxford University, UK, provided an overview of the Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre (GCSCC) as a key international institution on cybersecurity related research and capacity building.

He focused his intervention on one of the flagship products of the centre, namely a Cybersecurity Maturity Model (CMM), aimed at assessing the level of cybersecurity maturity at the country level in order to provide indications and guidance to the government on how to improve cybersecurity.

The model is articulated in 5 pillars and has been used by the centre, in cooperation with strategic partners such as ITU, to assist 17 Member States to date. Through a series of interactions with national stakeholders, the use of the CMM helps improve the decision-making process and activate actions to render cyberspace more secure.

He finally mentioned the strategic cooperation that the centre is having with ITU, specifically on key initiatives such as the National Cybersecurity Strategy project which involves 15 organizations.

Key suggestions and trends highlighted in this session include cyber threats becoming transversal thus impacting the population as a whole, from youngsters using ICTs mainly for social interaction and entertainment to professionals working in public and private sector. To this end, a clear message was conveyed by all speakers on the importance of a collaborative and cooperative approach. Also, the establishment of capabilities such as Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) and frameworks such as National Cybersecurity Strategies (NCS) are essential to achieving a global culture of cybersecurity.

**Session 3: Digital Inclusion and ICT Innovation for Sustainable Development (SDG 4/5/9, WSIS AL C3, C4, C7)**

This session focused on the initiatives undertaken at the regional level to foster access to telecommunications/ICTs, in particular for persons with disabilities, and to encourage entrepreneurship, and innovation and increase ICT skills.

***Ms Ieva Žilionienė***, Director of the Strategy Department, Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania, introduced the session by highlighting the importance of allowing all members of the society to benefit from the opportunities of ICTs. She stressed the need to identify a common ground for further action by learning from experiences from initiatives carried out in different countries of the region.

In his keynote address, ***H.E. Mr Karol Okonski***, Under Secretary of State, Republic of Poland, presented the opportunities and challenges of Mobile ID initiatives and presented the Mobile ID expert group, which was launched in the context of the Regional Initiative for Europe on innovation.

He highlighted that, recognizing the importance of information and communication technologies for development, the government of Poland has made ICTs a key policy priority. This includes the launch of the Polish Mobile ID initiative, which is to be launched as a pilot in May 2017. This project will take advantage of the growth in mobile networks and users and advances in geo-location based services, to deliver personalized, and better services to citizens in Poland. It will include the centralization of all information and services, including e-government and payment services, into one single device.

The presentation reviewed the key enablers of mobile ID projects, in particular a wide mobile user base, reliable and widely available mobile connectivity, an enabling legislative environment, and awareness about security and privacy components. He also discussed the key challenges, which include the acceptance of users but also the private sector to agree to new ways of delivering and using services, including financial transactions. At the same time, it is important to win the public’s trust, and to deliver stable, flexible and scalable technical solutions that can adapt to technological changes.

The presentation looked at examples of mobile and electronic ID projects in different countries to present the possibility of public-private partnerships, regulatory options and technical solutions. It also highlighted that while in some countries mobile and electronic ID services are optional, other governments have made them mandatory for the delivery of specific services.

***Ms Amela Odobasic***, Head of Public Affairs, Communications Regulatory Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina, talked about Building National and Regional Capacities to Enhance ICT Accessibility. Ms Odobasic recalled the UN’s commitment to people with disabilities, and its plea to enable *all* citizens to fully participate in society and the economy. She presented the Regional Initiative on accessibility and affordability of telecommunications/ICT products and services with special attention to persons with disabilities to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable social and economic development.

The main objective of this initiative is to strengthen regional cooperation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including governments, operators, and manufacturers. The initiative raises awareness and promotes relevant guidelines on public policies. It further seeks to develop national and regional capacity through relevant web accessibility trainings and to encourage the implementation and measurement of progress. Ms Odobasic highlighted that while most developing countries in the Europe region have adopted the legal and regulatory frameworks, the level of implementation of ICT accessibility remains low.

***Ms Marsida Duskhu***, Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP), Albania   delivered a presentation on National Approaches to Innovation. She explained that Albania, has yielded concrete recommendations, which is implementing, from the current ITU Regional Initiative on innovation, and building upon that, the country has submitted a proposal for a new Regional Initiative for Europe on “*ICT centric innovation ecosystem, taking into account emerging technologies”*

The Albania ICT Centric Country Review, a case study project which started in December 2015 included 46 interviews with institutions from six different stakeholder groups and a multi-stakeholder consultation. The executive summary was presented during the Innovation Week on 17 May 2016.

Ms Duskhuconcluded that the government of Albania is currently reviewing the National Action Plan of the Digital Agenda Strategy 2015 – 2020 and the Economic Reform Program which includes an innovation, competitiveness and a start-up fund, and a voucher scheme.

***Mr João Magalhães and Mr Pavel Racu***, Academia de Codigo, Portugal highlighted the importance of digital literacy and digital skills and demonstrated how better ICT skills can facilitate career changes, and addresses economic challenges, such as unemployment. While many countries continue to have high unemployment rates, there are many opportunities for people who aquire ICT and programming skills since there is an important lack of workers with these skills in many sectors.

The speakers introduced the Academia de Codigo initiative “Getting Unemployed People Into a Coding Job”, which provide training on code development to unemployed citizens and thus helps them to find employment. In addition, the Academia de Codigo carried out a study to identify reasons why relatively few people acquire ICT skills and become ICT experts. This study showed that some modifications to the school curriculum and an increased focus on ICT training could address the lack of people with ICT skills. Following this review and the provision of additional training material for teachers, children’s mathematical skills increased substantially.

***Dr Toni Janevski***, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (FEEIT), the FYR Macedonia provided information on Capacity Building through an ITU Centre of Excellence. The (pre-recorded) presentation provided an overview of the ITU Academy and Centres of Excellences, including their geographic distribution and numbers, main objectives, and working methods. Dr Janevski also pointed to the relevant websites and showed participants how to benefit from these centres, which include trainings and such topics as future internet, mobile broadband, and Next Generation Mobile Networks. He also invited participants to provide feedback on the trainings, which can help to further improve the ITU Academy, the global ITU flagship for capacity building.

Key suggestions from the session are that ITU members will need to continue or even strengthen their collaboration and partnership in implementing new Regional Initiatives on priority areas such as innovation, accessibility and affordability of telecommunications, digital skills, human capacity building and ICT applications.

**Session 4: New Collaborative Paradigms for ICT4SDG (SDG 4, 5, 17 / WSIS AL C1, C3, C11)**

This session focused on sharing national and regional strategies and policies strengthening multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of ICT4SDG actions. It also provided a platform for exchange of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through ICTs.

To set the stage, ***Mr Jaroslaw Ponder***, ITU Area Representative, Europe introduced the session as very relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He referred to the speakers who represent different sectors and who work closely with ITU and the community at large, as key advocates on the importance of ICT as key enabler for the implementation of the SDGs.

***H.E. Mr Dejan Maslikovic***, Assistant Minister, Republic of Serbia, provided the keynote address and shared the Serbian experience of the use of ICTs in the sector of culture. One of the main efforts undertaken so far by the Republic of Serbia is the digitization of their national culture content, through a multi stakeholder approach. Their work has received the support of international experts, as well as the shared experiences of several developed countries. The process of digitization went through a detailed national process, based on a defined legal framework and structure, which allowed the definition of a national strategy of the digitization of Serbia’s culture related content. He also highlighted several challenges, which were addressed through the involvement of many stakeholders, as well as the establishment of standards and good practices to maintain a long term digitization effort.

***Mr Per Hasvold***, representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) presented a session on ICT for Health. He shared information on the well-recognized “Be Healthy Be Mobile”, a joint initiative between WHO and ITU, focused on countering non-communicable diseases by applying mobile technologies on health related issues. Together, both ITU and WHO have engaged with several countries around the world to design and implement m-Health programs and projects, as well as elaborating handbooks.

He furthermore informed the participants on a new project within the framework of the “Be Healthy Be Mobile Initiative, signed in March 2017 between the EU, ITU and WHO and funded by the Horizon 2020 program, aimed at establishing an m-Health European hub, as well as the building of human capacity. Through the EU project, additional hubs in other regions will be set up, based on their needs and capacities.

***Dr Danguole Rutkauskiene***, Head of Young Computer User’s School at Kaunas University of Technology and Head of Working Party at National Digital Coalition, Lithuania, presented a session on ICTs for Empowering Women, and shared her vast experience in this field. She shared information of the level of specialization of the ICT sector, with a large number of different careers opportunities.

Only around 29 per 1000 women in Europe have an ICT related degree and they also tend to leave their ICT related careers more often than men. Some of the reasons of this current negative trend are social stereotypes, low self-confidence and a negative image of the sector. Efforts are being made to improve this situation, through the work of the European Centre for Women and Technology, which especially focuses on making efforts to attract girls to study ICT and other related science degrees. She concluded her intervention by sharing some of the valuable efforts made by her country, Lithuania, and making several recommendations including how to motivate girls from a very young age, to review the national education systems and share ICT and girls related good practices at the national and regional level.

***Dr Laszlo Gabor Papocsi***, a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) presented a session on ICT for Agriculture and shared the experience of a study on the implementation of e-agriculture strategies in Europe and Central Asia countries. He referred to the preparation of a joint publication between ITU and FAO related to this review, which includes national and regional solutions, applications, initiatives, networks, lessons learned and good examples on ICTs, agriculture and rural development. Dr Gabor Papocsi concluded that the results of the study vary much from country to country, as well as between regions. More emphasis needs to be placed on measuring the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of e-agricultural initiatives and activities.

A pre-recorded presentation was provided by ***Mr Christoph Legutko***, Government and Policy - Central and Eastern Europe, INTEL, who focused on ICTs for Education. He described several benefits related to education transformation, such as employment and economic development, competitiveness, citizenship and social equity. He empathized the importance of access to broadband as key for the success of education. He also referred to the need of establishing broadband policies to promote widespread, affordable, high-quality broadband connectivity for education transformation.

He finally concluded mentioning the need to equip schools, students and their families with modern ICT tools and affordable, high quality broadband access, modify the regulatory framework to foster investments and financing of broadband access in the last mile and liberalize access requirements to ultra-fast networks.

Key suggestions from the session are that ITU members will need to continue to strengthen their collaboration and partnership. The presentations also showed very different dimensions of the important role that ICTs are playing within different UN organizations, with many possible activities and partnerships such as the ones shared by WHO and FAO, which have demonstrated true value.

**RDF 2017 Closing Session**

**Mr Jaroslaw Ponder**, Coordinator for Europe, delivered the closing remarks in which he thanked the Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, all speakers and participants. He noted that deliberations of the RDF could be considered at the RPM—EUR during the discussions on the Regional Initiatives, taking into account the emerging trends identified by the RDF. He wished everyone returning home safe travels, while noting that he is looking forward to the discussions that will take place at RPM-EUR scheduled to begin the next day.

In closing, **H.E. Mr Ričardas Degutis**, Vice Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, thanked the BDT Director, the ITU Area Office Representative for Europe and all the participants on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania for their productive discussions.

He indicated that through effective implementation mechanisms, such as the ITU-D Regional Initiatives, growth of the ICT sector is definite. He believes that European countries need to work further on roaming pricing in order to provide consumers with best possible opportunities to communicate when they are abroad. Given that resilience and trust issues are getting more complex, countries face many challenges. He expressed concerns with aging society and persons with disabilities with regard to digital inclusion. He was glad that these topics were discussed at the RDF as they will pave the way for the future improvements.

He added that future collaboration poses challenges for countries individually, regionally and globally. Discussion within the ITU framework is therefore ‘a must’, as the community must keep all possible ways to collaborate open and, more importantly, use every opportunity to act together.

He wished all participants and members of ITU to continue on the implementation of SDG Agenda and closer cooperation in ICT between ITU members.

H.E. Mr Ričardas Degutis, Vice Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, Chairman RDF-EUR 2017

Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania

26 April 2017

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_