

**Address by Mr Mohammed el-Anouar Maarouf
Minister of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy**

**World Telecommunication/ ICT Indicators Symposium
Hamammet, 14-16 November 2017**

- Your Excellency, Mr Brahim Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union,
- Your Excellency, Mr Abdoukarim Soumaila, Secretary-General, African Telecommunications Union,
- Your Excellency, Mr Mohammed Ben Amor, Secretary-General, Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO),
- Your Excellency, Governor of Sousse,
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to express to you all how proud I am to stand before you at the inauguration of the 15th session of the World Telecommunication/ ICT Indicators Symposium. The session is held under the auspices of the Prime Minister, Mr Youssef Chahed, who has been prevented by unforeseen circumstances from being with us today but has asked me to convey his greetings and good wishes for the success of the symposium.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Following last year's World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, we meet today at the second major event organized by ITU in this city, at around the same time of year. This is an indication of the continuing support given by Tunisia to ITU which, founded more than 150 years ago, is the world's oldest international organization. The pace of technological development throws the importance of the Union into relief and further convinces us of the need to support and assist it.

The relationship between Tunisia and the Union is an old, special and close one and we are determined to continue to contribute effectively to the international efforts of the Standardization, Radiocommunication and Development Sectors. The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) was launched only 25 years ago and, although its resources are meagre in comparison with the scope of its ambitions, it offers the world and, in particular, the developing countries, many invaluable services, including specialized training, technical support and development projects. On behalf of you all, I would like to thank Mr Brahim Sanou for the services provided by ITU-D, which benefit us all by reducing disparities and gaps in development between nations and peoples.

Tunisia believes that building the information and knowledge society on secure foundations for the future and establishing a policy of international solidarity designed to combat all forms of exclusion and marginalization in this area are priorities for developing and emerging countries, and, given the close, organic link between ICTs, on the one hand, and economic development, employment and exports, on the other, will stimulate the development agenda in general and the telecommunications sector in particular. Investment in knowledge and establishing the information society is, basically, a bet on development. It is the starting point for addressing future challenges and joining the ranks of the developed countries, a fundamental component of the new economy and the engine that drives development in its broadest sense.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We meet today to discuss the subject of indicators in telecommunications and the information society. Indicators are an important element, enabling a country's progress to be measured on the basis of comparison tables. Furthermore, they provide data to stimulate investment by identifying and evaluating the development of infrastructure, access networks, ICT use and, lastly, human capacity. In this sense, indicators are the foundation and principal basis on which strategies and plans are built, providing quantitative data and indicating points of strength and weakness to enable countries to formulate their plans and goals.

In this regard, Tunisia proposes that indicators linked to the intersection matrix of the 11 WSIS Action Lines and 17 Sustainable Development Goals should be defined and developed, and that consideration should be given to the possibility of creating a standing committee to monitor and follow up these indicators. Apart from other considerations, this will be of help in preparing the reports scheduled for submission to the United Nations General Assembly in 2025 and 2030.

As regards human development, Tunisia proposes that training and skills and capacity building in the management of statistical indicators should be promoted by introducing and implementing special training programmes to respond to the needs and expectations of developing countries.

From this perspective, and to ensure that the indicators reflect a country's actual situation, we call for the international dimension to be taken into account when preparing indicators, which should be coordinated with reports published by international bodies such as the World Bank and World Economic Forum. This will force us to adopt a well-defined, scientific approach that is clear to all concerned, along the lines of the consultancy approach with countries or experts, when developing indicators for the ICT sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the occasion of this global symposium organized by Tunisia, I cannot fail to affirm my country's continuing support for the ICT activities of ITU and regional unions. In particular, I would like to mention the African Telecommunications Union and Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization. We believe that regional and international cooperation and partnership are essential to reduce the digital gap between peoples.

In conclusion, I reiterate my welcome to all participants, organizers and guests of this global symposium, as well as sponsoring organizations and companies. I am delighted to propose the appointment of Mr Habib el-Dababi, Secretary of State for the Digital Economy, as symposium chairman.

In the interest of our peoples, I wish this symposium every success in its proceedings.