

# EUROPE REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING (RPM) FOR WTDC-14

## *OPENING CEREMONY*

TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2013  
BELGRADE, SERBIA

## *OPENING SPEECH*

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**DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL,  
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Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is a real pleasure to be here with you today in the historical city of Belgrade for the ITU Europe Regional Preparatory Meeting for next year's World Telecommunication Development Conference, WTDC-14.
- On behalf of ITU's Secretary-General, Dr Hamadoun Touré, Let me express ITU's profound gratitude to the Republic of Serbia for hosting this meeting, as well as yesterday's Regional Development Forum. We warmly welcome you to this meeting.
- I have been informed that yesterday's Forum was a source of rich and productive deliberations and discussions.
- It is clear that the RDF theme of 'Fostering Growth and Innovation in the ICT Ecosystem' was carefully chosen and well-covered during the Forum, and I thank you for your active participation and invaluable contributions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am pleased to note the impressive progress achieved in the first twelve years of the new Millennium, in terms of ICT development.
- By the end of this year there will be almost seven billion mobile cellular subscriptions globally, and mobile penetration here in the European region will surpass 125% by the end of this year. In terms of mobile broadband, Europe is clearly the world leader, and far ahead of other regions, with 67.5% mobile broadband penetration at the end of 2013.
- Europe is also clearly the world-leader in terms of Internet, with eight of the top ten countries worldwide for Internet usage all located in Europe (the other two are New Zealand, 8<sup>th</sup>, and Qatar, 10<sup>th</sup>).
- At the same time we need to recognize the enormous challenges facing the ICT sector today, particularly here in Europe, in an era of rapidly growing data volumes; revenues which are static, or even falling; and of endemic under-investment in ICT infrastructure.
- We should also recognize that even in the world's wealthiest countries, there is still a digital divide – between countries; between cities and rural areas; and between citizens at different socio-economic levels.
- We need to further develop telecom/ICT services and we need to encourage further investment in the telecom/ICT markets, including the European market.
- This is why ITU organized the World Conference on International Telecommunications, WCIT-12, which took place in Dubai, UAE, last December – and I am pleased to see the active and constructive contributions of European Member States, as well as European industry members, in the WCIT process, which the Secretary-General and I highly appreciate.
- We need to take advantage of the successes already achieved, and we also have to implement the tasks agreed by WTDC-10 in Hyderabad, India.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- This regional preparatory meeting gives us a very welcome opportunity to address these issues.
- I am pleased with the contributions to this meeting, which cover a wide range of issues that are critical and particularly relevant to this region.
- As you know, the regional preparatory meetings for the other regions were held earlier this year, and the reports of these meetings are published as information documents to this meeting. I invite you to study these reports, which will be useful for your discussions.
- We are here to listen, to take guidance from you, and to work with you. I am confident that we will leave here with very fruitful results for the conference next year.

Distinguished colleagues,

- ITU was set up in Europe 148 years ago. From the very beginning, the European Member States and European Industry members have always supported ITU including its mission, its strategic plans, its financial systems and all its activities.
- I commend these efforts by European Members; I believe the members of the region will continue their efforts to support ITU with its pre-eminent status in the global Telecom/ICT business in the future.
- ITU management has made efforts to work with the Members of the Region. We will continue to work with you, listen to your concerns, proposals and suggestions for a better future of ITU.
- I note that in his role as Director of BDT, Brahima Sanou has managed to keep good contacts with the members of this region, which both the Secretary-General and myself have very much appreciated and supported. The Secretary-General and I also appreciate the efforts made by the two other Directors to strengthen their cooperation with the regions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- Before I close, let me express my gratitude to the BDT staff, under the leadership of the Director, Mr Sanou, and to staff from the other parts of ITU, for their efforts in preparing for this RPM for Europe. They have all been working hard to ensure the success of this and the other regional preparatory meetings for WTDC-14.
- *(Keep in mind a possible new paragraph for the new place of WTDC-14)*
- Let me therefore close my short remarks by wishing you a very successful RPM.

Thank you.