

## **Regional Development Forum for the Americas,**

**21 February 2017**

**Welcome addresses:**

**Mr Brahima Sanou, Director,**

**ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau**

- Mrs Teresita Palacios, President of the National Telecommunication Commission, CONATEL
- Mr Oscar León, Executive Secretary of the Inter - American Telecommunication Commission, CITEL
- Mrs Cecilia Ugaz, Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Resident Coordinator
- Representatives of UN agencies, Regional Organizations and ITU-D Sector Members
- Distinguished delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is for me a great pleasure to be in Asunción and welcome you all to the Regional Development Forum for the Americas. I would like to express my gratitude to the Paraguayan Administration for hosting the Regional Development Forum (RDF) and the Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for the Americas in preparation for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17). I would like to thank, in particular, Mrs Palacios, President of CONATEL, for the warm and friendly welcome.

Ladies and gentlemen:

The region of the Americas touches the North and the South Poles with a great richness of cultures, social and economic backgrounds.

As many of you may know, I used to be Regional Director for Africa before my election as Director of BDT. Having served in a very diverse region, I understand the challenges faced and the opportunities offered by such diversity.

That is why we, at BDT, focus with passion and determination on the implementation of the Regional Initiatives because through their implementation we can provide a powerful tool to help integration and communication across distances and cultures.

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.

I am proud that BDT has taken the lead in initiating such dialogue. Last year ITU and the World Health Organization (WHO) organized an inter-ministerial round table between ministers of health and ministers of ICTs in Geneva to discuss the use of ICTs to improve universal health coverage.

We also organized together with UNESCO a Policy Forum which brought together ministers of education and ministers of ICTs for the first time to explore the role that cross-sectoral collaboration can play in fostering innovation and the use of mobile technology to improve the quality, equity and accessibility of education.

We worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop an e-Agriculture Strategy Guide to help Member States to adopt a strategic approach in making the best use of ICT developments in agriculture.

During this RDF, we will discuss the role that ICTs play in achieving the SDGs.

We will review the work of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau in the region, with a focus on the Regional Initiatives.

We will talk about the importance of research and innovation for the development of telecommunications/ICTs; and the role of the private sector and international cooperation institutions.

I thank you all for joining us on this multistakeholder platform to discuss development issues in Americas Region.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Before concluding I would like to invite you to attend the next World Telecommunications Development Conference that will take place in Buenos Aires, from 9 to 20 October 2017 under the theme ICT④SDGs.

This year the ITU Development Sector is celebrating 25 years and we invite you to join us to celebrate this important Anniversary in Buenos Aires during WTDC.

I would also like to invite you to the 17th edition of the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) will be held in Nassau, Bahamas, from 11 to 14 July 2017 under the theme "Living in a World of Digital Opportunities".

I look forward to your discussions today and I am sure that the outputs of this RDF will inspire the Regional Preparatory Meeting that will start tomorrow.

I hope I will have the pleasure to welcome all of you again in Buenos Aires in October.

Thank you.