ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Arab States

Opening speech

Khartoum, Sudan, 30 January 2017

Mr Brahima Sanou,

Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau

- His Excellency, Eng Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, Assistant to the President of Sudan
- Her Excellency Dr. Tahani Abdulla, Minister of Communications and Information Technology
- Excellency Ministers here present
- Dr. Yahia Abdalla, Director of the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC)
- Eng. Khaled Foda, League of Arab States,
- Eng. Mohamed Ben Amor Secretary General of AICTO
- Eng. Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General of Arab Sates Broadcasting Union
- Representatives of UN and Regional Organizations,
- Distinguished delegates,
- Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you to the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17), for the Arab States.

First and foremost, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Your Excellency Eng. Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, for honoring us with your presence to this opening ceremony. This is a testimony of the importance that the highest authorities of Sudan give to ICTs.

Please convey, on behalf of ITU and all the delegates here present, our deepest gratitude to the President, the Government and the people of Sudan for hosting this Regional Preparatory Meeting, and for the hospitality extended to all of us as well as the excellent facilities put at our disposal.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference we are preparing will take in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 9 to 20 October 2017 under the theme of ICT④SDGs. This year is also the 25th anniversary of ITU Development Sector that we will celebrate together at WTDC.

The theme ICT④SDGs is an appeal to all of us to use the tremendous potential of ICTs to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs because ICTs cut across each and every SDG. E-education, e-health, e-agriculture, big data, open data, cloud computing, and the development of the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence are offering huge opportunities for achieving sustainable development.

The adoption of the SDGs has broadened our mission and mandate. We are now required not only to provide broadband and universal access to ICT services at affordable price, but equally important, to make ICTs work for other economic sectors.

Our actions should go beyond the ICT sector to take into account the ICT ecosystem. A new ecosystem where ICTs are about streamlining Government processes, bringing education and health to the neediest people in order to create national cohesion, inclusiveness and economic growth.

Distinguished participants

During this RPM we will report on the implementation of the Dubai Action Plan, with an emphasis on the Regional Initiatives and the positive impact on people's lives in the Arab Region.

I would like to thank all the Administrations of the region for their commitment and dedication which led to this success. I would also like to thank the ITU Regional Office in Cairo for the great work done under the leadership of Ebrahim Al Haddad.

Looking forward we will introduce to you the preliminary draft of the output documents of WTDC-17. As an innovation, and for the first time, we are engaging our Members at an early stage in the preparation of these key output documents namely:

- The preliminary draft of the ITU-D Contribution to the ITU Strategic Plan,
- The preliminary draft of the ITU-D Action Plan and
- The preliminary draft of WTDC-17 Declaration.

These documents have already been prepared and discussed at the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) and its Correspondence Group meetings. They are submitted for your consideration and input.

The progress report of the Correspondence Group on Streamlining Resolutions, will be also presented for your inputs.

The Regional Development Forum for the Arab region, which was held yesterday, was an opportunity to hear from various stakeholders about the ICT sector in the region. The Forum was a great success and I would like to thank all of you for your active participation and invaluable contributions. The Summary of the Discussions is brought to your attention in an Information document.

Dear representatives of the membership

The ICT landscape keep changing. We are at the eve of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which has been defined as a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds. Internet of things and artificial intelligence are key drivers of such changes.

It is my hope that next WTDC will embrace this new landscape in order for ITU and ITU-D to remain an active player and facilitator of these innovations for development.

We are here in Khartoum, a city where the Blue Nile and White Nile meet. I am convinced that, with the usual support of H.E. Dr. Tahani Abdulla, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, and NTC under the leadership of Dr. Yahia Abdalla, our minds, aspirations and our inspirations will also meet to make this meeting a great success.

I thank you.