High Level Segment on Smart Sustainable Cities

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*Welcome Remarks*

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Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Buenos Días, Bienvenidos,

Muchas gracias a Telefónica para hospedar a estos eventos y también a nuestros partners Huawei, Fujitsu, Ericsson y Nokia.

Es un placer estar aquí en la bonita ciudad de Madrid.

Madrid is an example to the world how to create an urban environment that is eminently habitable.

Madrid is ranked the 10th most livable city in the world according to Monocle magazine, and also ranks among the 12 greenest European cities.

One thing that is evident to any visitor is that town planners have given Madrileños an architecturally rich but green environment to live in. Madrid is the European city with the highest number of trees and green surface per inhabitant. It is this combination of high and low tech, new and old, that makes Madrid an urban landscape to be proud of.

Going back in history we have always had visions of future urban environments.

Plato described his vision of a city-state in 380 BC. The great artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci described his vision for an ideal city in the 13th Century. Da Vinci wanted to design a city that would be more united, with greater communications, services and sanitation to prevent the future spread of diseases such as that which had decimated Milan.

In cinema we have seen visions of future cities from Fritz Lang’s Metropolis in 1927 to Luc Besson’s Fifth Element in the late twentieth century.

Authors, philosophers, artists and filmmakers have understood that cities are key to our future. They have understood that our drive to migrate to urban centres is a fundamental and instinctive survival mechanism.

Now we are able to harness the enormous power of ICTs to make cities better places to live.

And providing standardized ways of implementing these solutions means that municipalities across the globe can benefit. Innovation can be shared across the world.

ITU is working on standards for a multitude of technologies that can target urban problems, including intelligent transport that can be applied to make city streets safer and cleaner; smart water and smart grid to create greater efficiency in these vital utilities; faster broadband technologies to ensure equitable access; cloud computing that offers to power many future applications.

To address the specific issue we have established a new Focus Group on Smart Sustainable Cities to assess the standardization requirements of cities aiming to boost their social, economic and environmental sustainability through the integration of ICTs in their infrastructures and operations.

It met for the second time here in Madrid this week under the able chairmanship of Silvia Guzman, Telefónica.

Every day it seems that we are discovering new and innovative ways to capture the power of ICTs. Biometric data or to give it a more technically correct name "quantified self data" is set to become gold dust for smart city planners.

For example GPS data can determine individuals' real-life travel patterns guiding transport designers decisions on public transport, or the design of new roads or cycle paths.

At ITU headquarters in Geneva we recently hosted a display of a project called VilleVivante which used a methodology to capture the traces left by mobile phones as they move across a city with their owners. This is an excellent planning tool providing a unique insight into a population’s movement across an urban environment. The information could even be leveraged to determine the best location for services, or chose the best spot for a shop or restaurant.

Evidence shows that more and more of us are moving into cities and it is believed that seventy per cent of greenhouse gas emissions emanate from these population centres.

A "smarter" approach to delivering vital services – such as transportation, healthcare, education, public safety, energy and water – can reduce that figure and make our cities safer, cleaner, and more convenient places to live.

With coordinated thinking and a collegial approach to maximizing the benefits of new technologies for the benefit of all, we can ensure that our increased migration to cities can be matched by an increase in the quality of urban environments and ultimately an increased in quality of life for the citizens of all the world’s cities.

I would like to thank all our moderators and speakers, and especially our distinguished speakers at this opening ceremony, for being with us today. I wish you all an extremely interesting and productive day.

Muchas gracias.