



**Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

**Plenary Meeting of the ITU Council  
on Tuesday, 31 May 2016 at 9:30  
Popov Room, Tower Building, ITU**

Secretary-General Houlin Zhao,  
Ms. Zoller [Chair],  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary-General, for having invited Ambassador Hamamoto and myself to address the Council today. Your leadership, in stressing gender equality through your commitments as a Geneva Gender Champion but also through ITU's wider programmatic work, is a bright example of our shared efforts towards a more equal and prosperous future. Information and communication technologies are among the main factors shaping this future and we must ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, has full access to the benefits of these transforming developments. ITU members have recognized this necessity through the adoption of Resolution 70 on Gender mainstreaming which is at the heart of today's Council meeting.

Last year, by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community renewed its commitment to “leave no one behind.” This means that right from the start of implementing this agenda and the other path-breaking agreements that our leaders adopted on disaster risk reduction, financing for development and climate change, we cannot afford to exclude half the population of our planet. In many ways, these agendas require a more inclusive approach than we have ever seen before and gender equality is a fundamental requirement to enable this new mode of cooperation.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, goals on ending poverty, achieving gender equality and empowering women, as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies are linked to indicators and targets on women’s access to productive resources, on the implementation of non-discriminatory legislation and on the creation of gender-sensitive development strategies. As we are moving into the digital age, all of these indicators have technological dimensions. The Internet and mobile phones can facilitate access to productive resources. New legislation on global governance of emerging technologies needs to be considerate of the needs of all parts of society, and gender-sensitive development strategies require that we further raise awareness about gender specific impact of our policies.

International Geneva, as the operational hub of the international system, is at the centre of a new interconnected, horizontal and cross-sectoral approach that enables actors worldwide to draw the connections between different issue areas and build partnerships. As part of our efforts to enhance our cooperation across Geneva, the Geneva Gender Champions initiative was born. In fact, ITU's commitment as part of the Geneva Gender Champions network to encourage gender balance among delegates attending ITU conferences and meetings illustrates the rationale for this initiative very well. What delegates decide here in Geneva, and the work of the International Organizations and NGOs here, have a direct impact on every individual around the world. So if we are serious about ending gender inequality and thereby giving a major boost to sustainable development, we need to start right here, in the conference halls and offices across International Geneva.

Many of the actors here in Geneva have been aware of the need to promote gender equality for a long time. Your own resolution on a gender perspective in ITU is proof of that. So when the Permanent Representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Hamamoto, the NGO Women@theTable and I got together to launch the Geneva Gender Champions network last year, we only needed to provide a catalyst for action in a common framework across Geneva. The incredible speed, with

which the network expanded to now include 110 Champions, shows that it is not only possible, but that there is a desire to pursue the common goal of gender equality across organizations and issues. This way of working will be essential to achieving the ambitious goals, not just of the Geneva Gender Champions initiative, but of the 2030 Agenda and other policy frameworks for the coming years.

The Geneva Gender Champions initiative is about personal, concrete commitments by heads of Permanent Missions, International Organizations and civil society organizations including private enterprises. Each Champion commits to the Panel Parity Pledge, by which we aim to increase gender parity on panel discussions in Geneva. I am myself no longer speaking on panels that do not include a woman and we are seeing a shift towards more diverse and inclusive debate. It is very simple: if we want diversity in the outputs of our work, we need diversity of input. The parity pledge, just like ITU's commitment to more diverse delegations at conferences, are big steps in that direction.

In addition to the panel parity pledge, each Gender Champion makes two more commitments that are specific to their organization. As a result, we now have more than 250 proposed concrete actions, that entities from

across International Geneva are taking this year to advance gender equality in our working culture, and in our programmes and projects. Coinciding with the first year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, these specific actions are a step towards accountability and measurable progress – features that will be key to implementing the wider, interconnected Sustainable Development Goals.

As we continue to expand the network of Gender Champions here in Geneva, we are also promoting the initiative in other hubs of the multilateral system. I have been talking to colleagues in New York, Vienna and Nairobi for example, and I hope that those of you who have travelled to Geneva for this Council meeting will also be inspired and take the ideas to your Ministries and organizations back home. You can find more information about the initiative on our website, and on social media including Twitter and Facebook – which brings us back to the importance of ICTs and the cross-cutting impact of technology.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is undergoing transformations of a magnitude that many have not yet fully grasped. Fast technological progress that challenges the complex procedures of multilateral governance as well as persistent inequalities are among the major issues that we have to address. The new

frameworks that the international community has set last year are a unique opportunity to do so. Here in Geneva, we have an unparalleled expertise that enables us to be at the forefront of implementing them. ITU is playing a major role in mobilizing technology as a source for sustainable and equitable development particularly through its programs to include women and girls in the relevant processes. Through the Geneva Gender Champions network, these efforts are now connected to those of more than a hundred other leaders and their organizations across Geneva.

It is now my pleasure to hand over to Ambassador Hamamoto.

Thank you very much.