

**Opening statement by
Petko Draganov,
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD,**

to the WSIS Forum 2010

Geneva, 10 May 2010

Mr. Secretary-General of ITU,

Ms. Director-General of UNESCO,

Mr. Director-General of UPU

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me start by conveying Secretary-General Supachai's apologies for not being able to participate at this opening session of the WSIS Forum. As we speak, he is opening UNCTAD's Public Symposium on responses to the multiple crises facing the world economy.

I am honoured to attend on behalf of UNCTAD the WSIS 2010 Forum. Following last year's success and the ensuing intensive consultations with stakeholders in the interim period, the Forum offers a great opportunity to keep up the momentum in discussions related to how ICTs can contribute to a broad range of development goals. This year's theme – Turning Targets into Action – seems most appropriate. We are rapidly approaching the half-way point between the Tunis phase of WSIS and 2015, when the United Nations General Assembly will review progress towards achieving both the WSIS targets and the Millennium Development Goals.

Against this background, all stakeholders in the public and private sector should make the best use of this Forum with a view to identifying constructive approaches to advancing the ICT-related development agenda. It is my hope

that the discussions that will be held in the various sessions will highlight successful initiatives, bring new ideas and strengthen relevant networks. The organizing team has made a commendable effort to propose a truly interactive WSIS Forum 2010.

The annual multi-stakeholder gatherings in Geneva as a follow-up to the WSIS serve an important function. This Forum, as well as next week's session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, allow us to monitor progress in implementing the various commitments made at the Summit. They also provide for an assessment as to how the international community can contribute more effectively to leveraging ICTs for development. This latter point is especially relevant, as the world of ICTs is indeed in a constant state of motion.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The phenomenal growth of information and communication technologies is a continuing development success story. Five years after the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, a range of new opportunities for growth, trade and development are emerging on the back of more widespread diffusion of ICTs. Few had anticipated the dramatic expansion that we have witnessed of mobile phones in recent years. This wireless revolution is now changing the way people communicate and the manner in which companies do business.

Despite the significant progress in improving access to ICTs in developing countries, much work is yet to be done before we can achieve an inclusive information society for all. Important gaps remain both between and within countries. The broadband challenge deserves particular attention. In many developing countries, limited or no access to broadband places enterprises

at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis their counterparts in the developed world. There is a similar persisting gap in connectivity between the rural and the urban areas within developing countries as well.

With the right conditions in place, ICTs can open new ways to create jobs and improve income distribution; improve access to information, knowledge and finance, and link local firms more effectively to the global economy. New and bolder policy solutions are needed to overcome remaining barriers to wider development benefits from ICTs. This is why UNCTAD member States, civil society representatives and other stakeholders are debating at the Palais des Nations these same issues and others related to recent developments, threats and challenges to development, such as resource mobilizations, external resource flows, food security and environmental sustainability.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to invite you to attend the 13th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which will take place next week at UNCTAD. As part of the Commission's session, in the afternoon of May 17th, there will be a special meeting with heads and representatives of international organisations and other stakeholders to provide an overview of the progress made over the past five years in the follow up and implementation of the WSIS outcomes. The Commission will also address issues related to enhanced cooperation and Internet Governance.

Once again, I wish the WSIS Forum 2010 successful deliberations and look forward to its contribution to our common cause of development.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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