Opening Statement

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Dr. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary-General, ITU

Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD

Ambassador Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, UNDESA

Mr. Johannes Christian Wichard, Deputy Director-General, WIPO

H.E. Mohamed Naceur Ammar, Minister of Communication Technologies, Tunisia

Your excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, friends and Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today at the opening of the WSIS Forum 2010.

As many of you know, UNDP has been supporting the WSIS process since 2002 and the UN Group on the Information Society since its inception in 2006. Since then, ICT for Development has been mainstreamed into our core practices, with more than 100 technical advisors working within programmes to ensure the sector is fully leveraged to bring optimal results.

Since 1992, UNDP has prioritized the integration of Information and Communication technologies as a tool to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods. It has gained substantial on-the-ground expertise and knowledge through global

initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP), the Small Islands Developing States Network (SIDSNet) and the Cisco-UNDP Network Academies programme for 24 LDCs; regional initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Development Internet Programme (APDIP), the Internet Initiative for Africa (IIA) and ICT for Development in the Arab region (ICTDAR); and national programmes such as Ukraine's FreeNet, Egypt's Community Access Centers and Cameroon's SchoolNets, to mention a few.

A surge in the use of ICTs by government, civil society and the private sector started in the late 1990s with the aim not only of improving government efficiency and service delivery but also to promote increased participation of citizens in the various governance and democratic processes.

The use of ICT in the overall field of democratic governance activities relates to three distinct areas where UNDP has already been doing innovative work to support the achievement of the MDGs:

1. First, e-governance, which encompasses the use of ICT tools and technologies to enhance both government efficiency, transparency, accountability and service delivery, and citizen participation and engagement in the various democratic and governance processes.
2. Second, the mainstreaming of ICT into the various UNDP Democratic Governance Practice service lines such as Parliaments (e-parliaments), elections (e-elections) and others.
3. And third, the governance of the new ICT which addresses the institutional mechanisms related to emerging issues of privacy, security, censorship and control of the means of information and communications at the national and global levels.

In Haiti, UNDP – working with the Office of the Special Envoy, former President Bill Clinton, has built and launched a new online portal that will promote the efficient use of more than $9 billion in aid pledged to Haiti's reconstruction, while holding donors to their promises and ensuring transparency and accountability of the use of their funds.

The initiative is part of the UNDP's support to the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation, the Office of the Prime Minister, other government bodies and all partners including the private sector, to address the challenges linked to the management of external

aid. The system tracks the money from pledge to impact and will include contributions and support from NGOs and the private sector.

We see this tool as an important and critical component of Haiti's reconstruction process, and believe it addresses all the concerns of the international community as to how the funds will be spent, by whom and for what. It also provides a portal through which the people of Haiti can monitor use of the funds and hold their elected representatives accountable for how those funds are spent. Already journalists in Haiti are monitoring the site and then communicating what they see to their publics through the radio.

Another example is seen in Mozambique, where UNDP has joined UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the Millennium Villages project to improve communities' capacities towards integrated local development in all socio-economic sectors. As part of this joint support, the joint programme facilitated an agreement with mCel, a local telecommunication/cellphone company to install one cellphone tower per village, in order to connect the rural communities to the World via cellphone and Internet. The programme also established an ICT centre with computers and internet access, and is providing training to local residents, with an emphasis on gender empowerment.

Based on this extensive work, UNDP has explicitly recognized the key role that ICT can play in the fight against global poverty and as an effective tool in helping to achieve the MDGs. UNDP's ICTD strategy focuses on upstream policy advice to help countries design a strategic approach to ICT as an enabler for development and link it to Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) and related development focus processes. This is complemented by support to the implementation of ICTD priority programmes based on a multistakeholder approach and innovative national and global partnerships to secure additional resources and expertise.

I wish you all fruitful and dynamic deliberations during the next four days, and encourage you all to listen to and learn from one another even more than from the people on the stages and podiums. Often the greatest benefit one derives from events such as these, aside from pushing the important agenda a few steps closer to realization, is the empowerment,

the encouragement and the enlightenment you get from your colleagues – colleagues who are out in the field, in the trenches, so to speak, helping to turn the vision of WSIS into a reality for all people of the planet.

Thank you for your attention.