Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Minister of Posts and Telecommunication, Somalia.

Address by Hon. Mohamed Ibrahim, Minister of Post and Telecommunication, Head of Somali Delegation to the WSIS+10 High level event at the ITU in Geneva, June 10 2014.

Honorable Guests, Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is good to be back in Geneva, especially when it is not snowing… and I am excited about the WSIS outcomes and the path we have followed so far; as we move from a data generating and information consuming society, to a knowledge guided, and hopefully soon, to a wisdom governed society.

It is exciting to be part of the knowledge society where business can be conducted online and offline without crossing any of the old fashioned boundaries or political borders. In Somalia, we are using ICT as a means to fast track rebuilding of our country and develop the necessary institutions to enable us to regain our position in the international community.

The important of ICT in economic development, education and other sectors is almost universally accepted and agreed upon as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century. In my country, ICT is being used for a wide range of purposes, such as the establishment of the Rule of Law, a concept many in this forum take for granted, but which is still being reestablished in Somalia at this time. In 2016, Insha'Allah we will have the first one person one vote election to enable us to elect the first democratic government since the early 1960s. ICT will play a major role

in this important event as we produce credible ID cards, and ICT systems to manage the whole election process in a way which will eliminate the possibility of corruption.

Let me share my own reflections on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) initiative which I have followed over the last ten years. As we review progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcome and to take stock of achievements in the last ten years it would seem that we have come a long way. Or have we? Among friends, I feel we should congratulate each other on what we together have achieved so far, but we also have to be frank and honest to each other and remind ourselves of the steep, long and winding road ahead (with all due respect to Paul McCartney).

After the nice words, and bureaucratic jargon… what exactly have we really achieved? The millennium development goals were a noble idea, with honorable intentions but 2015 is around the corner and then what? These are questions, my folks in Mogadishu ask me and today here, in Geneva I am politely forwarding those questions to you all as we work through the WSIS+10 outcomes.

Technology has the power to give us equality of opportunity - or to worsen that inequality to almost unbelievable levels. Excuse me and allow me to digress a bit, as I pay my respect to history in this age of WSIS and the hyper connected world.

On the anniversary of the D-Day liberation from European fascism none of us need any reminders of what misuse of technology can lead to, unchecked. Hence the need to develop robust standards and credible governance frameworks; much more than just robust, more sophisticated and relevant systems, we need to be more in touch with the realities and dangers of cybercrime, The current models provided by

ICANN and others champions are now limited and need to be reviewed to reflect current conditions.

Like many countries in Europe, saddled with the circular logic of a debt crises and austerity, we in Somalia are also suffering from the circular logic of aid, that makes us feel like patronised colonials again. For example:

We can't spend money on expertise and technology to give us our own security because we are told that our financial institutions are underdeveloped or worse can't be trusted. Then why not help us build them now? So that tomorrow they will be functioning properly and will not be underdeveloped anymore.

We can't resist bribes from super-rich communication pirates and outlaws we are told, because only they have the money to buy anything - including security. Then why not help us fight them and build the necessary infrastructure and institutions rather than spending valuable scarce resources, tax payers money on producing tons of reports by and for *Monitoring groups, etc.?*

I am sure you get the picture. The question is; how to break this cycle of corruption and allow lawful institutions to grow and flourish while forcing those pirates and outlaws, local and external agencies, who currently try to control the ICT sector, sabotage national initaitaives for their own inglorious benefit, to either join the development train or go elsewhere.

Some challenges which are pressing: Surely these days it is possible to invest and implement ICT based solution to fight violence and terrorism. And surely it is possible to provide coverage for those who live in remote areas of our country. Recently there was a once in one hundred year flood in Somalia that killed many of my folks back home at about the

same time as the tsunami disaster. One you heard about but the former you may not have. Why? No satellite access. No fast internet. No help. Whatever the excuse, we need to seek and find holistic solutions to all regardless of which side of the digital divide one lives.

Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, we as human beings have the technology to do better. My government wants us to do better for those I now serve. I want us to do better by making decisions to make technology deliver increased outcomes for the sake of my people and for humanity. Not next year but next month, or even next week.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Somalia is back and we are actively opening up the Somali ICT sector and allowing competition from the global service providers. Accessing the internet via Satellite is being replaced or complimented by Fibre optics, which is changing the landscape of the Somali ICT Sector. We have joined the ICT global ecosystem I have members of the Somali telecom sector here today for the first time attending WSIS and some have joined the ITU as sector members. We have approved the Telecommunication law which will regulate the Somali ICT sector and protect investment, and we invite all to directly invest in the Somali ICT sector.

Thank you for listening. I hope that I have provoked some thoughts of how far we have come but also how far we need to go. So much more can be achieved as part of a community.

I want to conclude here and to thank the ITU for its leadership and hospitality. I thank you all.

Mohamed Ibrahim
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