

ITU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR THE AMERICAS

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Speech by

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- Ms Teresita Palacios, President of the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL),
- Mr Brahim Sanou, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau,
- Mr Bruno Ramos, Regional Director, ITU Regional office for the Americas,
- Mr Oscar León, Executive Secretary of the Interamerican Telecommunications Commission (CITEL),
- Distinguished delegates from the countries of the Americas,
- National authorities,
- Colleagues of the United Nations system,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me, as Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Paraguay, to take part in the opening of the ITU Regional Development Forum. The forum has come about in response to the need, on the one hand, to report annually on the progress made in implementing the Dubai Action Plan and, on the other, to highlight the challenges and opportunities in the field of development faced by stakeholders wishing to contribute to the Bureau's work in the Americas.

In September this year, it will be two years since world leaders adopted a set of global goals for eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all, as part of a New Sustainable Development Agenda. This new agenda, as you know, sets out 17 goals to be achieved by 2030.

The text of the SDGs acknowledges that "the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and develop knowledge societies."

What is more, although mentioned directly in only four of the 17 goals – education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation (SDG 9), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17) - ICTs in fact play a key part in achieving all of them.

The SDGs and targets are global aspirations which require every State, firstly, to decide how to integrate them in its national planning, policies and strategies, and secondly, to define its own national goals in the light of the level of global ambition, but also taking account of national circumstances. Lastly, each State must meet existing commitments and comply with international human rights standards when implementing the agenda.

Paraguay is making important progress in adapting the SDGs to its own national circumstances and creating an institutional framework with the establishment of the Interinstitutional Commission for the Implementation, Follow-up and Monitoring of International Commitments made by the country as part of the SDG process, and with the process of aligning the National Development Plan with the 2030 Agenda.

In this regard, it is worth noting that Paraguay's National Telecommunications Plan 2016-2020, as a sectoral plan, is an integral part of the National Development Plan and is also ultimately aligned with, and will contribute to the implementation of, the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Paraguay and CONATEL for promoting this important regional forum. As telecommunications and information technologies evolve, opportunities and challenges are created.

In a region with such a marked history of inequalities, it is now more important than ever for information and communication technologies to drive the creation of opportunities for the inclusion and empowerment of all people without exception.

And it is also essential to address the challenges through international cooperation and to work together on opportunities for new alliances (like those which this forum can create), in order to create an environment conducive to innovation and growth, so that capacity and opportunities may grow in every country in the region.

Last, but by no means least, I commend ITU for organizing these forums, which bring together national and international experts to promote progress in information and communication technologies in the region and thus bring about the much-needed transformation of our societies to achieve the sustainable development that will "leave no one behind".

I wish you all a very productive day.

Thank you for your attention.