

ITU Regional Development Forum (RDF) for the Americas

Asuncion, Paraguay, 21 February 2017

Address by Oscar León, Executive Secretary of CITEL

I am honoured to be able to be with you today and welcome you to this forum for the Americas: a region in which the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) is constantly working to facilitate and promote comprehensive and sustainable development of telecommunications/ICTs in the Americas and, this year in particular, to contribute to the successful preparation of the next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17), which will take place in one of our Member States, Argentina.

I would like to thank our friend Brahim and the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau for their initiative, which has brought us here today for the forum - an event which will undoubtedly help us to identify opportunities and discuss the challenges we face in promoting the development of telecommunications and ICTs and making them a part of everyday life for the peoples of the Americas.

More than that, it will enable us to highlight the needs and expectations of the region as we approach WTDC-17, ensuring that the interests and views of the States in this region, as reflected in interamerican proposals, become known internationally and contribute to decision making in ITU.

The Americas are a region that recognizes the importance of integration and the potential of telecommunications/ICTs as a development tool, as well as the benefits and the challenges we face in this information society, one challenge being the digital divide.

As a previous ECLAC study noted, "The transition to information societies does not take place in a vacuum but rather within the structure of the region's societies."

Indeed, changes in technology and global connectivity present new opportunities and new challenges for our societies in transformation. Those opportunities and challenges oblige us to understand, prepare for, adapt and respond to the changes taking place. They call for cooperation of the private sector with the public sector, with international and regional bodies, with each and every stakeholder within and beyond the digital ecosystem.

Certain topics, including bridging the digital divide, disaster risk reduction, transition to digital broadcasting, and access for vulnerable individuals and groups, are emerging in the Americas as crucial areas of interest in which telecommunications/ICTs play a decisive role in development and in strengthening national public policies.

The OAS and its Secretary-General, Luis Almagro, are very concerned to make their programmes and projects more accessible to the people of the Americas, and telecommunications/ICTs are a key tool for achieving that goal. That is why it was decided to take advantage of assistance from specialized bodies like CITEL to help strengthen the organization and enable it to respond more effectively and rapidly to the expectations of the governments and peoples of the region.

We hope that this type of discussion will help to enrich ITU's regional work plans and the digital agendas of countries in the region, and lead to progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in our region and throughout the world.

Thank you very much.