

Speech by

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ITU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR EUROPE

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Dear Director of the ITU Development Bureau Mr Brahima Sanou,

Dear Vice-Ministers; Karol Okonsky (Poland), Dejan Maslikovic (Republic of Serbia),

Honourable guests,

Dear Feliksas,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to welcome you in Vilnius my hometown.

I hope that besides the important and meaningful work that we have to do, you will have the opportunity to see Vilnius. Its written history starts in medieval (German) manuscript dated 1009, to recent times when in 1994 architecture of the old town in Vilnius was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Also, I am honoured that Lithuania is able to host and contribute to the ITU Regional Development Forum that is organized today and Regional Preparatory Meeting that will take place here on Thursday and Friday.

ITU RDF is a high-level event that focuses on the role ICTs are playing in the economic and social development of countries. In the ITU processes, we always like to acknowledge the importance of ICT in attaining Sustainable Development Goals. We need to work individually and were possible hand-in-hand in order to strengthen the impact of ICTs on the promotion of sustainable development in the region and even globally.

ICT development and the widespread use of ICTs are very important topics. All people have a right to use ICTs wherever they are. Topics such as 5G, digital economy, internet of things, big data, digital inclusion, security are on the cutting edge of the ICT ecosystem.

Many of us around the world and even in Europe tackle ICT issues in different ways. Therefore, this Forum is a perfect opportunity to discuss these issues and I am glad that they are being discussed here in Vilnius.

I would also like to add that we are working with businesses and other stakeholders in Europe to make sure the benefits of ICTs reach far and wide to strengthens our economies and improve the livelihoods of people everywhere. It is a continuous process, no one can stop it!

Without prejudging the outcome of the discussion, I stay positive that countries need to talk about ICT evolution and its spread, share best practices and promote further cooperation in order for us to develop and to foster leadership in the sector.

I will stop there. I hope that this Forum will be productive and you will enjoy your stay.

Thank you.