

## **Opening Remarks**

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**ITU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR EUROPE**

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**Vilnius, Lithuania**

H.E. Ričardas Degutis, Vice Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania (MoTC)

H.E. Dejan Maslikovic, Assistant Minister, Republic of Serbia

H.E. Karol Okonski, Under Secretary of State, Republic of Poland

Mr Feliksas Dobrovolskis, Director General of the Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania

Mr Manuel da Costa Cabral, Chairman, Com-ITU of CEPT (The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations)

- Distinguished delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the ITU's Regional Development Forum for Europe here in Vilnius, Lithuania. Vilnius is recognized by UNESCO as one of the most beautiful cities of the Old Continent with the largest Baroque old town in Eastern and Central Europe.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Lithuania for hosting the Regional Development Forum (RDF) and the Preparatory Meeting for Europe in preparation for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17).

Ladies and gentlemen:

As we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), policy makers, regulators, private sector, development partners and all stakeholders

of the ICT ecosystem need more than ever to establish an inclusive, multistakeholder and collaborative dialogue to achieve socio-economic development.

The Regional Development Forum is a perfect platform for such dialogue. During this RDF, we will share our experiences and insights with a focus on fostering ICT infrastructure development, digital inclusion and ICT innovation, and new collaborative paradigms.

Today we need to establish a structured dialogue with other sectors of life and I am pleased to say that, under my leadership, the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau has taken the lead in initiating such dialogue.

ITU recently co-organized with UNESCO the second joint Policy Forum on Mobile Learning. The Forum brought together ministers of education, ministers of information and communication technology (ICT) and representatives from the private sector to discuss how e-skills and mobile learning can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in the context of emergencies and crises.

The holding of this Policy Forum for the second consecutive year is a clear demonstration of ITU's commitment to establishing inclusive, multi-/stakeholder and collaborative dialogue on telecommunications and ICTs to achieve socio-economic development.

ITU also worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop an e-Agriculture Strategy Guide to help Member States to adopt a strategic approach in making the best use of ICT developments in agriculture.

ITU and the World Health Organization (WHO) also organized an inter-ministerial round table between ministers of health and ministers of ICTs in Geneva to discuss the use of ICTs to improve universal health coverage.

In this context, I am pleased to announce that we have just started a new joint ITU-WHO-European Commission project on establishing a European mHealth Innovation Hub. We will know more about this project during the course of the day.

I am happy to mention that representatives of WHO and FAO are with us today to further the discussion on ICTs for SDGs

Today we are also launching new reports coordinated by the ITU's Europe team, namely a catalogue for training offered by the ITU Centres of Excellence in Europe for 2017, a report on Mobile ID; the results of a Child Online Protection survey backed by country cases; and two reports based on initiatives for rolling out tools on Quality of Service measurement and on mapping of broadband services.

We shall also open for consultation a working paper on ICT for Energy. These are some examples of the results of the Regional Initiatives for Europe that benefited from the engagement of so many Member States and other stakeholders.

I believe in these dialogues. They are not only advancing our policy dialogue but they are also leading towards concrete cross-sectoral projects.

I look forward to your discussions today and I am sure that the outputs of this RDF will inspire the Regional Preparatory Meeting that will start tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you.