

BROADBAND COMMISSION: OPENING REMARKS

Kigali, 5 June 2022

A good afternoon to all of you.

It is a real pleasure to welcome you all back to Kigali, for our first physical meeting, in a long time.

Carlos, my friend and co-chair, thank you so much for making the journey here, to be with us, and for everything you do, to advance the work of the Commission.

Among our special guests today, I extend a warm welcome to the honourable ministers from Burkina Faso, Namibia, and Senegal.

This is the third time for us to convene in Rwanda, starting more than a decade ago, in 2011.

We have come a long way since then, but we still have some distance to travel, to achieve universal and affordable broadband.

It is very encouraging to see, that our Broadband Commission community, is as energetic and focused, as ever.

So I really want to thank you all for your continued commitment to our shared agenda.

This meeting is happening at a fortunate moment.

Right here in Kigali, we are also hosting the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), for the first time in Africa.

The theme is ‘connecting the unconnected’.

A notable feature of this WTDC, is the launch of Partner-to-Connect, a platform to mobilize new resources and partnerships for universal connectivity.

More than 200 pledges have been made so far, including 12 from Broadband Commissioners.

As an example, Rwanda has already benefitted from such partnership efforts, as a lead country in the Giga initiative, led by the ITU and UNICEF.

The pilot project in 63 schools has resulted in a quadrupling of capacity, and a 55% reduction in cost.

This shows there is an opportunity for us to link our work even more closely with parallel multilateral initiatives, that includes Smart Africa, which is headquartered here in Rwanda, and kindly hosted us to lunch today.

Thank you Lacina Koné, who heads the Secretariat.

We are still living in tough times, economically, politically, and in terms of global public health. The immediate future is full of uncertainties and risks.

But one thing is sure: All of the challenges we face, can be handled faster, better, and more equitably, by investing in universal, affordable broadband.

We have a rich agenda today, including the Virtual Health and Care working group, co-led by WHO and Novartis, which launched its report yesterday.

Once again, I am pleased to welcome you, and I look forward to our discussions today.

I now have the pleasure to invite our co-chair, Mr Carlos Slim, to make your remarks.