4th Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Smart Sustainable Cities and e-Government

Malcolm Johnson, Deputy Secretary-General, ITU, Thanh Hóa City, 4 July 2018

H.E. Dr. Phan Tam, Vice Minister of Information and Communications

H.E. Mr. Le Anh Tuan, Vice Chairman of The People's Committee of Thanh Hoa Province

Mr. Kyoung-Yul Lee, Secretary General of WeGO

Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Provinces, Honourable Guests, Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to add my welcome to this the fourth Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Smart Sustainable Cities and e-Government. I would like to thank our hosts, the Ministry of Information and Communications of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Thanh Hóa province for offering us this beautiful venue and wonderful facilities.

Cities across Vietnam are embarking on a digital transformation. Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang have been selected to be part of the proposed ASEAN Smart Cities Network. As Vice Minister Phan Tam said at

the World Telecommunication Development Conference last October, these new smart city initiatives will create new market opportunities for information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new opportunities for international cooperation.

That is why we are all here today: to build cooperation amongst nations in a region, which is home to more than 2.1 billion urban residents, and where by 2050 it is estimated that over two thirds of the population will live in cities. As the United Nations' specialized agency for ICTs, ITU is committed to bringing all stakeholders together to address the challenges of this rapid urbanization. We are working to develop the tremendous potential of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, the Internet of Things (IoT), and 5G have to build smarter, more sustainable cities. I will share with you some of ITU's most recent work in this area, but first let me thank the Department of Communications and the Arts of Australian and the World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization (WeGO) for partnering again with ITU to hold this Regional Forum to explore how these emerging technologies can support the transition to smart sustainable cities here in the Asia-Pacific region. It is in its early days, but we are

already seeing progress. For example here in Viet Nam real-time data is collected to provide city bus passengers with information about routes and arrival times, it is used to monitor water quality and service levels for residential and industrial users. These are two examples out of hundreds all across this country and the rest of the world.

What all these examples have in common is that they rely on technical standards. The creation of smart cities requires a trusted infrastructure capable of supporting an enormous volume of ICT-based applications and services, which in turn require adherence to common international standards to ensure openness and interoperability, reduce costs through economies of scale and avoid getting locked into propriety standards. ITU has a Study Group developing these international standards to enable the coordinated development of IoT technologies in smart cities, called ITU-T Study Group 20. Let us remember that the deployment of these technologies is expected to connect an estimated 50 billion devices to the network by year 2020, putting tremendous pressure on the radio spectrum – which is managed at the global level by ITU.

Most recently, Study Group 20 has been working on topics including the big data aspects of IoT, blockchain, machine-

to-machine communications, ubiquitous sensor networks, and artificial intelligence. Just a few weeks ago, ITU held its second AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva, which brought together leading minds in AI and humanitarian action from UN sister agencies and the business world in an effort to help accelerate progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The summit identified a number of practical artificial intelligence applications and supporting strategies to improve the quality and sustainability of life on our planet, including in our cities.

ITU also organized the first Forum on Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things for Smart Sustainable Cities in Latin America last May in Buenos Aires. The participants adopted a declaration that recognized the transformative potential of AI and IoT solutions in smart city development, something we might replicate here. They also pointed to the importance of international standards in supporting the interconnection and interoperability of city systems, as well as the need to encourage public-private partnerships when implementing related strategies. I am confident that the connections you make here in Thanh Hóa will spur collaboration between policy makers,

regulators, industries, NGOs, and academia and help further development.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative coordinated by ITU and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and supported by 16 other UN bodies to help make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable in accordance with SDG 11. The primary goal of this initiative is to advocate for public policy to encourage the use of ICTs to facilitate the transition to smart sustainable cities. I am pleased to say that we have made a lot of progress since the initiative was launched two years ago.

We have developed a set of Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities. These KPIs are based on ITU-T Recommendations Y.4903/L.1603. They provide cities with the tool to assess the contributions of ICTs to smart urban development. Over 50 cities have already successfully implemented these indicators, from Dubai to Singapore. ITU is currently partnering with Smart Dubai to develop a Global Smart Sustainable Cities Index, which will show cities around the world their progress in reaching different SDGs based on the data collected from our KPIs.

This represents an important step in making better policies and building smarter and more sustainable cities, not just in words but in deeds.

The United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative is open to all relevant stakeholders and I invite you to join. Right now, it is working on new topics such as the role of blockchain to the impact of AI and data sensing technologies. I hope that many cities in Vietnam and the Asia-Pacific region will join this initiative. I firmly believe that by working together and learning from each other, we can become smarter and achieve more than we otherwise would. At a time when more than half of the world's population is offline, especially in rural, remote and isolated communities I believe that we should also use ICTs to help people living in these areas to be more productive and sustainable – and reduce the move into cities.

It means that we need to bring connectivity to rural areas, something that is commercially challenging. But innovative solutions are in sight, with several projects underway. Here, too, these will need to be coordinated by ITU and will need to comply with ITU standards and harmonised spectrum.

In closing I would like to extend my thanks to all our moderators and speakers for being here and sharing their expertise and knowledge with us. I thank all our guest and all participants for joining us and I wish you all a most enjoyable and productive forum.

Thank you.