**ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe**
**Bucharest, Romania**20 April 2015

**OPENING REMARKS**

**by**

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**ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe**

**"Broadband for Sustainable Development"**

**20 – 22 April 2015, Bucharest, Romania**

* His Excellency Sorin Mihai Grindeanu, Minister for Information Society, Romania
* Mr Marius-Catalin Marinescu, President, ANACOM (National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications), Romania
* Mr Marcin Krasuski, Chairman, Com-ITU, CEPT
* Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed my great pleasure and privilege to join the host country in welcoming you at the opening of the ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe.

First and foremost I would like to express my deepest gratitude to His Excellency Mr Sorin Mihai Grindeanu, Minister for Information Society and the Government of the Republic of Romania as well as Mr Marius Catalin Marinescu, President of ANCOM for the invitation to hold this significant regional event in the capital of Romania and for the usual and kind hospitality extended to all of us.

**Excellency**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are living in an era of the convergence of telecom/ICT infrastructure, the convergence of services **and** the convergence of service providers. We are witnessing the emergence of new players, the displacement of revenues **and** the changes in business models.

The telecom/ICT industry has become broad and diverse, but most importantlyit is changing so rapidly that it seems that the future is today.

Under such circumstances, reporting back to the membership every 4 years at the occasion of Regional Preparatory Meetings and the World Telecommunication Development Conference itself would not be effective enough.

It is against this background that I took the initiative in 2011 to make the Regional Development Forums (RDF) the platforms for annual reporting to the membership at regional levels.

The RDF is therefore meant to be a platform for dialogue and interaction on the implementation of Dubai Action Plan between ITU-D Members and BDT.

The RDF is also an occasion to extend the conversation on development issues to other stakeholders of the telecom/ICT ecosystem who are not yet Members of ITU Development sector.

I was very happy that such approach was embedded in Resolution 17 of WTDC-14. Allow me to take a moment here to thank all of you individually and as CEPT and Europe Region for your support and commitment in the preparatory process and in the smooth and successful running of WTDC-14.

Let me recognize Mr. Fabio Bigi for his personal commitment and contribution and the Chairman of CEPT Com-ITU, Mr. Marcin Krasuski for the support and close cooperation with ITU. We shall continue to strengthen such cooperation because we have the same goals and we are serving the same people of the region.

As you are aware, WTDC-14 held in Dubai adopted five Regional Initiatives (RIs) proposed by European countries.

I am glad to report that since last WTDC, the Europe Coordination Unit worked closely with ITU Membership and other stakeholders in a bottom-up approach to facilitate the elaboration of proposals for concrete actions to be carried out under the Regional Initiatives for Europe.

All of them will be presented at this meeting and will serve as a basis for establishing of an implementation plan for the Regional Initiatives for Europe. I am confident that thanks to this bottom up approach we will be able strengthen impact of our join actions at the regional level.

It goes without saying that the implementation of the Regional Initiatives requires a true multi-stakeholder approach led by the governments of the region.

We in the BDT will take the needful steps to extend our hands to all the stakeholders in the region and outside the region for the implementation of these initiatives because Regional Initiatives **have been** and **will remain** my main priority and focus.

Let me also thank European Commission, in particular Mr William Dee and Daniel Spoiala, who on the daily basis facilitate our coordination with EC in order to create synergies in actions carried out at the regional level.

**Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The theme of the RDF is "Broadband for Sustainable Development".

Europe, is one of the most dynamic and fast moving regions of the world in terms of telecom/ICT. With an Internet penetration of 75% by end 2014, Europe has the highest Internet penetration rate worldwide. Europe also leads in the broadband challenge in the world. But still a lot remains to be done in order to make the provision of fast and ultra-fast Internet access universal across the region.

I believe that we should take all measures to avoid a new digital divide arising from unequal access to broadband technologies. And this is why we are here today.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome you all to this Regional Development Forum and to reiterate my gratitude and appreciation to our host, Romania, and particularly to His Excellency Sorin Mihai Grindeanu, Minister for Information Society, Romania for honoring us with his presence to this opening ceremony.

I look forward to very fruitful discussions.

I thank you.