**Original**: Arabic

**Statement by the Chairman of the ITU Council at the Extraordinary Session**

**His Excellency Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of ITU,**

**His Excellency Mr Malcolm Johnson, Deputy Secretary-General of ITU,**

**Distinguished Bureaux Directors,**

**Distinguished elected Members,**

**Distinguished heads of delegation,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honour to address you today at the Extraordinary Session of the ITU Council, after my election as Chairman of the Council for **2018-2019**. Let me begin by thanking you, distinguished members of the Council, for the great confidence you have placed in me with my appointment. I hope to meet you expectations and realize your ambitions in the coming period.

I would like to extend my immense gratitude to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for nominating me for the post. I must also thank the African Telecommunications Union and its Secretary-General for kindly nominating me for the post of Council Vice-Chairman in April 2018. I also wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the employees of Egypt’s National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, and particularly those who have worked with me here during the plenipotentiary conference, for their conspicuous efforts to support me during the elections, in which Egypt was re-elected as a Council Member State and I was elected to the Radio Regulations Board.

Let me, through you, thank the previous Chairmen of the Council and, in particular, the most recent of them, Mr Rashid Ismailov of the Russian Federation, for his work in the previous period, winning the acclaim of all Member States and fully deserving of our immense gratitude.

The Council is gathering here today following the successful conclusion of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2018 in the fraternal United Arab Emirates. It fills me with great pride that our first meeting of this session should be held here in the charming city of Dubai. I would like to thank the leaders of the United Arab Emirates and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority for their strenuous efforts during this last period and for the work we have witnessed to ensure the smooth running of the conference, provide comfortable conditions for all, and deliver on your expectations, with their traditional generous hospitality.

The Council acts as the Union’s governing body in the interval between plenipotentiary conferences. Its role is to consider telecommunication policy issues in order to ensure that the Union’s activities, policies and strategies are adapted to today's dynamic and rapidly changing telecommunication environment. In addition, it is responsible for ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of the Union, coordinating work programmes, approving budgets and providing oversight on all financial matters. The Council takes all steps to facilitate implementation of the provisions of the ITU Constitution and Convention, the Administrative Regulations (International Telecommunications Regulations and Radio Regulations), and the decisions of plenipotentiary conferences and, where appropriate, of other conferences and meetings of the Union.

This being the case, we have much demanding work to do in the coming period. I hope that we can all work together to remain in the good graces of all ITU Member States and of the authorities, companies and academia that participate in ITU, for the benefit of the international community, while ensuring global connection and access through:

1. **Growth – Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICTs;**
2. **Inclusiveness – Bridge the digital divide and provide broadband for all;**
3. **Sustainability – Manage challenges resulting from telecommunication/ICT development;**
4. **Innovation and partnership – Lead, improve and adapt to the changing telecommunication/ICT environment.**

**This conference of ours and all our duties require us to work in a spirit of communication and mutual respect in order to reach consensus on all our mandated tasks. I therefore urge you all to work in this manner in the coming period.**

In keeping with the happy atmosphere we are experiencing here in Dubai – a city of happiness ‑ I have some good news for you: Egypt has completed all the necessary procedural, construction and logistical work to build the new international conference centre in Sharm el-Sheikh, city of peace, which is to host the next **World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-19)** in October and November 2019. I would like to invite you all to attend this prestigious international conference. I have the utmost confidence that you will enjoy the atmosphere of the conference and the city of Sharm el-Sheikh itself ‑ although we should not forget to work hard in order to reach consensus on all **WRC-19** agenda items in good time and enjoy the time we save at the conference.

In closing, I would like to express very special thanks to my family, who have helped and supported me immeasurably and have had to endure my absence for extended periods as I fulfilled the local and international tasks entrusted to me.

**My thanks go also to all of you. After God Almighty, I depend on your help and cooperation to ensure success and fruitful outcomes in all of our work.**

**May God’s peace, mercy and blessings be with you.**