Mr Cyril Ritchie, President, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO)

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sisters and Brothers of Civil Society:

From the time of the World Summit on the Information Society, in 2003 and 2005, a new era opened in cooperation between the United Nations System and Civil Society Organizations, well beyond the traditional relations between the UN and NGOs.

WSIS had mechanisms for civil society cooperation and participation that were innovative, that were productive, and that have proved lasting.

The top political leadership of WSIS declared - and implemented - the conviction that the world’s newly-emerging Information Society should not be - and could not be - an affair for governments alone, nor for private business alone.

The world’s people, through structured associations, think tanks, cooperatives, scientific and technical institutions, and activist groupings were actors then on the world Information Society stage, and have so remained through the WSIS Follow-up process. I pay tribute to the International Telecommunications Union and its UN System partners, together with government leaders, for ensuring that the effectiveness of WSIS Follow-up was based on transparency and the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. Indeed, how could it have been otherwise, for INFORMATION and COMMUNICATIONS are basic to democracy, to the realization of human rights, to human well-being, to preparing a better life for future generations.
These participatory mechanisms, this participatory mind-set, are manifestly needed evermore as we move to the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. I recall and echo the public declaration made collectively just last week by a significant number of the independent experts of the UN Human Rights system who stated "Civil society is integral in helping Governments find innovative solutions to complex developmental problems....It is essential that the principle of partnership with civil society, as well as the space for civil society to freely operate, are at the heart of the post-2015 framework....The promise that no-one be left behind cannot be met without full and free civil society participation throughout the post-2015 process, from negotiation of the goals, targets and indicators to the monitoring and review of measures to achieve them."

Let us act TOGETHER in the spirit of that message, as we move to a Post-2015 world of Sustainable Development.