

WTDC-25 Baku, Azerbaijan – Statement on behalf of the European Commission

Chair, Madame Secretary-General, Distinguished Colleagues,

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the European Commission at this important conference on telecommunication and development. I would like to commend ITU, its Development sector and the Office for Europe for their work. Let me also thank Azerbaijan for hosting this conference in such a wonderful venue in Baku.

The **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** is an essential partner, whether it is about spectrum negotiations, global standard setting or fostering development across the globe. ITU is a place where we promote **together** the development of global telecommunication and ICT technologies, infrastructures and services. Throughout the years, the European Commission has secured **commitment and participation** in all relevant ITU bodies and contributed shaping global norms and initiatives.

We are also collaborating with our Member States and supporting the participation of EU experts in ITU activities in a **'Team Europe'** approach. We are committed to bridging the digital divides, deploying secure and trusted digital infrastructure and developing capacities across all regions - including through an EU Tech Offer.

Today our job has become tougher. Multilateral diplomacy is often challenged, and digital technologies may be used as a tool for geopolitical influence. In today's polarised and fragmented world, our joint work is essential to ensure that **ICT technologies and digital transformation remain anchored in a rules-based global digital order and fundamental rights.**

This year's **World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC)** is a key opportunity to join forces to bridge digital divides and use ICT to promote economic and social development. Connecting rural areas, supporting sustainable agriculture and fair trade, ensuring equal opportunities for girls and women: this is how ICT technology can make the difference for millions.

As Europeans we have a clear vision and clear responsibilities. Technology for us is never an end but a tool for social cohesion, economic progress, protecting human rights, and upholding democratic principles in the digital sphere, as we have outlined in our **International Digital Strategy.**

Using our funding capacity under the **Global Gateway**, which mobilises over €306 billion of investments, we will continue laying subsea cables between Europe and the rest of the world, bringing high speed satellite broadband in rural areas, deploying secure and trusted mobile networks, supporting e-governance solutions, or fostering cyber resilience. We are committed to **digital transformation** and happy to work with ITU and our global partners to achieve this objective.

Let me mention a few concrete examples on how we support connectivity across the world.

- The **Africa–Europe Investment Package** includes large-scale fibre-optic backbone, bringing broadband to over 100 million people in eight African countries.

- The **BlueRaman submarine cable**, will connect over 10,000 research and education institutions across **Europe, Eastern Africa, and India**;
- **The Team Europe Initiative on Digital Connectivity in Central Asia** will bring satellite broadband to over 1500 villages across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan;
- I would also like to mention **the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Digital Alliance**: a comprehensive framework for digital cooperation with projects on connectivity, cybersecurity, e-governance and Earth Observation.

Mr Chair, distinguished colleagues,

This Conference marks an important occasion to strengthen cooperation between us all and contribute to a human-centric global digital transformation, so I wish us all a successful WTDC-25.

Thank you.