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Excellences, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

It is a great honor to address you today on behalf of the Republic of Serbia at this pivotal World Telecommunication Development Conference. I wish to thank the Government of Azerbaijan and the International Telecommunication Union for hosting us here in Baku.

Over the past decade the world has made remarkable progress. Yet, billions of people remain offline, and connectivity, where it exists, is often limited by cost, speed, skill or accessibility. No country today can succeed in isolation. Connectivity is global by nature, and its benefits must be global as well.

In the current era of digital transformation, a robust and secure regulatory framework is more important than ever. Laws and regulations must be flexible enough to adapt to the continuous advancements in technology, and on the other hand to ensure consumer protection, privacy, fair competition and further development.

In the previous period, Serbia and Ministry of Information and Telecommunications made additional efforts aimed at aligning with the EU electronic communications acquis. After adopting the new Law on Electronic Communications, in line with the European Electronic Communications Code, we have additionally adopted around 50 rulebooks/bylaws, including Toolbox for 5G security. Soon we are about to adopt the Law on Broadband Infrastructure, through which we plan to transpose the EU Gigabit Infrastructure Act. Auction for the 5G network has also been completed, and we expect that by December, licenses will be granted to three mobile operators.

We place emphasis on cooperation with various stakeholders, industry included. It is important for us to improve and maintain good business environment. While drafting acts, we conduct transparent and open processes, including public consultations. Industry representatives, representatives of the non-governmental sector and academia are members of Ministry's working groups and in this way, we obtain valuable inputs from their side.

We consider digital infrastructure development to be of crucial importance for the attainment of universal connectivity. In that regard, we are working on faster and easier deployment of very high-capacity networks and infrastructure development in rural areas to secure universal and meaningful connectivity. One of the key infrastructure development projects run by the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications is the Rural Broadband Rollout Project, aimed at ensuring comprehensive broadband internet coverage across Serbia, particularly in rural areas. The project is being implemented in three phases, with the objective of providing next-generation network access to 99% of households and all schools/public institutions in Serbia by the end of 2027. With another project, named Connected Schools project we are

enhancing digital infrastructure in schools, providing new equipment, upgrading networks, and training teachers in digital skills.

Digital skills development plays important role in our approach to achieving universal connectivity. We are committed to building digital skills not just among young people but among adults too. During next year we are going to establish "digital corners" throughout Serbia aimed at improving educational opportunities and encouraging lifelong learning, supporting economic development by providing citizens with skills relevant to the digital economy.

After dynamic work on regulatory acts, we have established an SMS notification system for all citizens in cases of missing minors and in the event of emergency situations. For the coming year, we have also planned funds to implement a CBS system, but we are also interested in a joint solution at the level of the Western Balkans when it comes to these issues. Therefore, it is very important that we all work together on this topic.

In reference to the Regional Initiatives for Europe for cycle 2026-2029 we own special thanks to the ITU for recognizing the need to support Western Balkans on Emergency Warning Systems, aiming at roll-out of cell broadcast systems in concerned countries.

Excellencies, the next stage of global digital development calls for bold cooperation. Serbia stands ready to work with ITU and all Member States to build a future in which every person — no matter where they live — can connect, participate, and prosper.