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>> GITANJALI SAH: Is the Minute Minister of Slovenia online? She is not online? Tala, can you confirm?

>> The pandemic now seems like ancient history. Why do I say that? Because 1500 people have come here to Geneva for the WSIS Forum 2023 and they've come from over 150 countries, and what they're doing here is hoping to share and learn from each other, and each day I'll give you an update on what's happening here.

The new Chair of the Forum wants to share best practices from her experience as Minister of Digital Transformation in Slovenia.

>> One of our top priorities is digital inclusion and by digital inclusion, we mean access to Internet, but as knowledge and skills of how to use all the potential that the digital technologies are offering to our citizens.

>> There have been some really high-powered meetings on Day 1. For example, Ambassadors are gathering and right here behind me you have mayors from around the world meeting as well.

They're discussing here how to turn their cities into Smart Cities and to be able to handle climate change more rapidly and more efficiently.

Mayors from the Philippines, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, all face the same issues and potential consequences from global

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warming.

>> Here here because we want to listen and hear from current cities the way they are being run, the challenges they face, we're building some from zero.

>> 30UN agencies are involved with organizing this summit and in the past the ITU has a key role and the new Secretary-General has big ambitions.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: We had a number of targets we were supposed to achieve in 2015 like connecting all the world schools and half of the world schools are still not connected. I really believe we can achieve that goal. I hope by 2030, if not before, and make sure that every school in the world is connected to the Internet and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice.

>> The challenges are daunting. Nearly 3-billion people still don't have Internet access and by far the majority are women, and tackling that divide is at the core of this summit.

>> There was a call for bold results-driven action on Day 2 of the WSIS if you mean.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Ladies and gentlemen, this is our moment. It's the moment that the entire WSIS Community has been waiting for. Let's invest in an open, free, and secure digital future for all. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

>> Dear Chairperson?

>> The thought-provoking workshops called Knowledge Cafes brought participants together who in their daily lives might never meet and get them to share their experiences.

This one was called the Intergenerational Knowledge Cafe, getting individuals from different age groups to discussion issues like healthy aging and discrimination.

>> The purpose of this specific event is to enhance intergenerational collaboration, breakdown misconception around ageism and think of aging as a continuum and not as something that is negative.

>> Another workshop looked at gender equality and technology and the importance of role models in the tech industry. Without prominent industry leaders in this field, young girls are less likely to join the tech sector and gender equality and ICT society will never be reached.

>> Women actually institute 50% of the population, and technology is actually are all around us from our private life to business life, so it makes sense for women to contribute to this huge --

>> GITANJALI SAH: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us for the WSIS Forum 2023 Closing ceremony. It's a wonderful event. We have been working

virtually for the last couple of years, so it was so nice to see you all here finally in Geneva. We would like to start the Closing Ceremony by, of course, inviting our co-organizers, UNESCO, UNCTAD and UNDP is online. Can you please make sure UNDP is also online, Mr. Robert Opp? Our Minister, Chairperson of WSIS 2023 will also be joining us and we'll be alerted as soon as she's here with us in the room.

I would like to request you to please find a space to sit so that we can begin the closing ceremony, colleagues who are standing by the door. Can you confirm the partner, UNDP is also online. Okay. UNDP is not online and maybe we can invite Minerva to the podium as well, representing UNDP. He's connecting. Okay. Thank you very much.

Without further delay, we invite our Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Tomas Lamanauskas to please provide closing remarks of the WSIS Forum giving us a summary of the outcomes.

>> TOMAS LAMANAUSKAS: Thank you very much, Gitanjali. I really appreciate that. Welcome to the beginning of the end of this week, and I know it was -- it has been exhausting week for all of us with a lot of meetings, sessions, and discussions, but as been also very enriching week, very insightful week for me and a lot of you as well. Indeed, it's great to be part of another successful event attracting a lot of attention. Some also statistics here. We have around 1300 participants who actually came to the conference, you know, so here to participate with us physically. We had another 1300 participants who joined us online, you know, and many more registered as well.

We also have quite, you know, a few hundred people who used our LinkedIn platform, you know, so thanks a lot for, again, joining us in this innovation, but I think this will be open going forward as well, so we invite you to continue using that.

We had also 250 + sessions around happening during this week. You know, so, of course, we're open here to physical participants as well as to virtual participants as well.

You came from a lot of countries, 150 of them, more than 50 countries with -- with more than 150 high-level representatives attending as well.

So our discussions, again, highlighted the importance and need for solutions for topics such as education, health, financial inclusion, climate change, health, cybersecurity, smart cities, AI, infrastructure, cybersecurity, capacity building, as well as enabling environment for ICT ecosystem. These discussions were definitely, you know, were picking up attention. We have to report that we I think on Twitter

trended # WSIS trended 6 in Switzerland as high-level track and definitely that discussion was also noted.

Again, we had a opportunity over this week to hear a lot from governments, international organizations, businesses, Civil Society, academic leaders, and exactly in that multistakeholder fashion that we've use green to be used to in the last couple of years about the hopes of the future for ICTs.

We also had WSIS prizes, 18 winners, 17 champions as well recognized for outstanding work, great case studies and examples in promoting ICTs as a tool to empower and enrich our lives.

We really had discussions centered around key themes important this week, not only important this week but will be important for at least a couple of years now to come so how can ICTs, we still use as rescue to be open, so some days may want to use more softwares, but really need to make sure that clarity of the importance of action is important and how can we help rescue indefinitely shows this will also be a core topic in the discussion in September and SDG Summit and SDG Visual Day that the ITU with partners will be convening.

How WSIS can contribute to process like global digital compact, and again to help reach those agreements on a global scale on the future digital development, and as well as what and how we can prepare and use the best of this moment of WSIS + 20, it mean the 20-year review of this process and taking stake of where we are and as well as charting the road for the future.

So really for me, what is really is like really the importance since the session that I participated, the importance of inclusion to make sure that we bring everyone along in the digital journey, and so sustainable, make sure that we solution -- have solutions to not exaggerate the problems especially with regard to the climate crisis.

And ICTs in digital-centric including with the full respect of human rights. This WSIS Forum as well as the discussion was also the great example of the United Nations System working as one, and we have here our partners, we saw them in the course of this week, you know, so I think we have UNDP joining us until today, UNESCO, UNCTAD joining, as well as many more organizations that are joining with us in the organization of this event every year.

As well, of course, the discussion chartered and helped the discussions this year as already mentioned from the Global Digital Compact discussions to broaden our common agenda and some of the future discussions toward it. Thank you very much for all coming here.

Of course, before announcing what will happen next, I really want to thank not only attendees, but of course a world event, so also thank you everyone very much who was involved with organizing this amazing event. Of course, I already thanked and mentioned our sister agencies, and our bigger UN Family, and really a big thank you to you for being here with us all the time. Really, a big thank you to the focal points who really keep on the great work and facilitating WSIS Action Lines and make sure they're impactful and keep charting the agenda. As well as I have to thank my colleagues, Gitanjali and her team, who really put a lot of time, you know, and a lot of efforts and sleepless nights to make sure this happens. And I sometimes, you know, you ask her how many people she has on her team, you know, and after guessing that. So you know, you will be really surprised how can these things be pulled together in such an agile way if you have the right energy and right determination in place.

And, of course, thanking our a lot of support staff, interpreters, ushers, security people who really made sure that we have this event in the best possible way.

So, as you know, this is a physical event, but this is not the beginning or end of the engagement through the year. The WSIS Forum will continue in virtual format in April and May, and then I will see you again in Geneva for the WSIS Forum 2024, including I think also + 20 high-level event in Geneva in May. Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to closing discussions. Again, thank you for making this together a really great event. Thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Deputy Secretary-General and also for your dynamic leadership all throughout. It would not have been possible without your dynamic leadership and guidance. Thank you very much. As you all know the WSIS Forum is co-organized by UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD in collaboration with more than 32 UN agencies so I would like to invite Mr. Robert Opp from UNDP who is joining us virtually. He was here with us throughout the week, but he had to go back to New York, so Robert, can you hear us? The floor is yours.

>> ROBERT OPP: Thank you so much, Gitanjali. I hope you can hear me well enough. And, yes, thank you for the opportunity to speak at the closing, and apologies that I needed to travel back to New York yesterday to be able to be here for some urgent meetings today.

But, you know, like Tomas was saying, I would simply like to commend the stakeholders for another successful WSIS Forum. The leadership of the Chair of the WSIS Forum this year, excellency Minister of Digital Transformation of Slovenia, the

generous support of partners like UAE and Saudi Arabia and other sponsors, and all of you, the stakeholders that engage through the entire year as well for all the different kinds of events and streams that go on.

And, of course, the ITU Team with Gitanjali as the fearless Lead of the Secretariat and tiny but mighty team. Then, of course, our partner agencies in as part of the UN Group on the Information Society including ITU, UNESCO and UNCTAD.

I think if I reflect back on this, which was my first WSIS experience personally, you know I can see how much progress WSIS has made over the last couple of decades in really looking at the global understanding of how ICTs digital technologies can help us achieve our global goals. Whether you talk about the youth engagement and empower am around climate change or the gender trend setters or the Mayor's Forum that happened this year, it is really kind of incorporating these important elements of how ICT and digital technologies are changing the way we can actually reach people and have impact. It's a good model for a multistakeholder platform.

Now, as Tomas said, we really need to build on these achievements, so looking at what is happening this year. We have the Global Digital Compact, we have the Summit of the Future coming up in 2024 and before that the SDG Summit this year. So we really look forward to engaging with all of you, but especially our partner agencies, those 32 agencies that make up part of the UN Group of Information Society, including our co-leads of ITU, UNESCO and UNCTAD to really engage with that WSIS + 20 review so that we're really looking at how we're kind of making the WSIS Forum, keeping it relevant, staying directly linked with the impacts that we need to have, and that are going to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as we enter the second half of the period of the SDGs, knowing that we are behind and that we need to accelerate. We really believe in UNDP that digital technology can be the major accelerator for ensuring that we stay -- that we get back on track for the SDGs and that we're able to arrive where we need to arrive in 2030.

So with that, thank you very much, again, to all of you. Back to you, Gitanjali.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Mr. Robert Opp. It was a great pleasure to host you here in Geneva, and we'd also like to thank Minerva who has been with us and a close supporter and committed partner of the WSIS process. Thank you very much, Mr. Opp.

I'd like to move on to UNESCO, David is representing UNESCO the Closing Ceremony. The floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Gitanjali. It works, yes. Thank you. I would like to start by thanking you, Tomas, DSG of ITU for hosting us, and of course please pass our thank you to the Secretary-General on our behalf, and also our WSIS co-organizers, UNDP, Robert Opp, and of course UNCTAD and all the big UN Family as was already said.

I would also like to take time to thank Gitanjali and all the WSIS team with which did an amazing job for an exceptional job, I will say, to make this happen. And also I would like to thank my esteemed colleagues from UNESCO for the passionate participation and help in setting up this forum with all the many Action Lines that we are being tasked with.

You know, there are many challenges I had, many challenges I had. You know about that, contingencies are changing so fast. The Global Digital Compact, we certainly support the work of the review for the WSIS + 20, and our Secretary-General Mr. Jelassi said WSIS 2.0 and rethink about it and contribution. We look forward to working with the WSIS UN family and colleagues on this important step.

There are two things mainly that came out, I think, from here, and Tomas mentioned that there are two key points that for us are very important. There is a people-centered approach and human rights approach. I think the human element is really what is making the difference here, and I would like it, in this regard, to thank you all because you once again made it possible for this human experience and exchange that is WSIS and the WSIS Forum in particular. WSIS is really this, the community of you at that make this possible every year. So, I invite you to continue the discussions online because the forum is not finished totally this year. I would like to also give you rendezvous for the next year for WSIS Forum 2024. Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Davide for UNESCO being committed partner and so many action lines within the WSIS framework. We'll move to Scarlett representing UNCTAD here today in the Closing Ceremony. Scarlett?

>> SCARLETT FONDEUR GIL: Thank you very much, Gitanjali. So, UNCTAD this week was very pleased to join our fellow co-organizers and the stakeholders in particular of the WSIS Forum 2023. And I just wanted to remind everyone that although this is the closing ceremony of this week, we are also looking forward to the interesting online sessions that will be happening in the coming months. So keep engaged.

The Forum this year focused on how WSIS Action Lines can be more effectively used for recovering lost ground after the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the achievement of the

SDGs. And it's also one year closer to the deadline of the 2030 Agenda. We're nearing the review of the WSIS + 20, and we're facing increased calls for international digital cooperation.

The UN System has recognized the importance of digital cooperation and the urgency of taking concrete actions to make it effective. So we were very happy to welcome the Secretary-General's Tech Envoy for the first time in the WSIS Forum.

And in the context of the WSIS + 20 Review, you might know, some of you might know that UNCTAD acts as Secretariat to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and we will be having the annual meeting of the CSTD from 27 of March to 31 of March in Geneva and the CSTD will review the progress made in the implementation of and follow up of the outcomes of the WSIS at the regional and international levels.

And then in May, UNCTAD will hold its inter-governmental group of experts on e-commerce and digital economy that is going to look at the role that data can play in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, so I would like to encourage all stakeholders to engage and follow the timely discussions in the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and also in the inter-governmental group of experts in the coming months.

Now more than ever, from our mandate on helping countries navigate the evolving digital economy and understand its implementations for development, UNCTAD is committed to enabling an inclusive digitalization that benefits everyone. We will continue to advocate for multistakeholder partnerships, for shaping a Global Digital Compact, for the Summit of the Future in 2024 to draw and apply lessons from the review of these 20 years of the WSIS process, to trace a path for digital cooperation beyond 2025, and to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you all for all for all you have contributed to the discussions this week and the insights that the international organizations can get from you on the ground and Civil Society. Thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Scarlett, and for UNESCO -- UNCTAD's commitment to the entire process. We have our Chairperson, Minister of Slovenia with us now, joining us virtually. Colleague, could you please -- could you please put the Minister's camera online and make sure she can make an introduction and conclusion to the WSIS Forum.

Chairperson, can you hear us?

>> EMILIJA STOJMENOVA DUH: Perfectly. Hi, Gitanjali.

Can you hear me?

>> GITANJALI SAH: Yes. We can hear you clearly, but we do not see you currently, so colleagues, if you could please enable the camera for the Chairperson.

>> EMILIJA STOJMENOVA DUH: Okay. I think we can hear each other. Great. Distinguished Deputy Secretary-General, esteemed participants, ladies and gentlemen, I would have wished to be in person with you also at the Closing Ceremony but due to my commitments in the government I have to address you online. It has been an honor and really a privilege to welcome you as the Chair to the World Summit of Information Society 2023. Over the course of the Forum, we have gathered Ministers and high-level policymakers, head of regulators, Civil Society, private sector, and academia representatives from more than 150 countries to exchange ideas, share experiences, and work towards a common goal of using information and communication technologies to advance sustainable development.

Throughout the course of the Forum, we have tackled a wide range of issues from bridging digital divide, enabling environment for digital technologies, inclusiveness, access to knowledge for all to digital economy and trade, as well as climate change. We have also explored the ethical dimensions of ICT, the importance of enhancing cybersecurity, knowledge societies, and capacity building. In addition to the plenary session, we have had the opportunity to engage in lively discussions and debates during more than 250 high-level sessions, workshops, exhibitions, and of course networking events. We have heard from innovators, entrepreneurs and startups for technology to solve world pressing problems, education is especially inspiring, and these WSIS prizes are efforts made by organize organizations from around the globe in leveraging the ICT in supporting the implementation of WSIS outcomes.

Learning from numerous inspiring stories and insights, I'm deeply convinced that we are able to harness the power of technology for our common good. However, our main focus should lie on the following, access, availability, and affordability of digital technologies should be the driving force of digitalization.

Digital education and digital skills should play a crucial role in the adoption of digital technologies, not only do they enable citizens to use the ICT for good, but as prevent harm and decreased risks.

Trust in digital is of key importance. We can only reach it by developing a human-centric and human rights-based approach to digital technologies fully including everyone be

regardless of their gender, age, location, and race. Indeed, we are all facing deep-rooted challenges, unequal access to digital services, gender, age, and geographical digital divides persist. Risk to safety online for vulnerable groups such as children and elderly people is utmost importance. Cybersecurity and cybercrime threats should be taken most seriously, and international cooperation is needed to work on a common framework in this regard.

Challenges are here, but if we look at them from the right perspective, they become opportunities for great success. As we close this Forum, I want to thank each and every one of you for your contributions and your commitment to building a better future for all through the ICTs.

Also, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin for her leadership and for making this Forum an excellent platform for the exchange of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. My thanks also go to Mr. Tomas Lamanauskas, ITU Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Cosmas Zavazava, Director of ITU telecommunications bureau, Mr. Director of ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and Mr. Mario Maniewicz Director of ITU Tele. And thanks go to coordinating team and various agencies that have collaborated to ensure the success of this summit.

Thank you, Tomas, Gitanjali, Vladimir, it was great working with you.

I commit myself to continue working in the framework of the WSIS process. Slovenia has been and will stay an active member of the ITU and the entire UN System. We wish to encourage to the greatest exinternational communication in development of telecommunication technology and data and access to services.

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. Those are the words of Henry Ford. Let us continue to work together to use the power of technology to advance sustainable development, foster innovation, and promote human rights.

Once again, thank you for your participation, your passion, and your commitment. I wish you all a safe journey back to your homes, and look forward to seeing you at the future WSIS events. Thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Git thank you Minister Chairperson 2023 for your guidance and for your wisdom in implementing the entire WSIS Forum and we will continue all through the year in different UN processes and activities planned for the future. Thank you very much, ma'am, to you and your team from Slovenia.

We would now like to open the floor. It has been a long-standing tradition that stakeholders have always requested for the floor in the closing. So if you would like to speak, you can either raise your flag, or some of you do not have a flag, so you could raise your hand and introduce yourself and please take the floor.

I see that IEEE is getting ready. Over to you to please make your remarks.

>> IEEE: I didn't really want to be the first, but thank you very much. Secretary-General, I should say Deputy Secretary-General, Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I'm truly honored to be here today on behalf of IEEE as the specific activity partner of the 2023 WSIS Forum.

First and foremost, I would like to offer sincere congratulations on an excellent hybrid WSIS Forum to the ITU and to the entire WSIS 2023 team. I know it's not easy to do, and I really would offer those congratulations.

This week's WSIS sessions have demonstrated a sense of optimism along with clear progress in addressing the WSIS Action Lines in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. A level of sharing, and most importantly cooperation among all parties working towards achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change through acceleration of technology development, technological development and deployment is most significantment all of the work that is presented and discussed on impact of deploying and using technology, and the collection and analysis of data, metrics and accountability. Of course, as was mentioned before, there is still much to accomplish before success can be declared. But I'm truly optimistic that together we're well on our way.

I do note through continued engagement and associated development of standards, critical framework is provided for advancing sustainable technology and its possible use. IEEE further notes the importance of using ethically-aligned design principles, which prioritize the well-being of people, the flourishing planet, and purpose-driven progress.

As we all know, standards play a very important role in providing the procedures, guidelines, and specifications by which goods and services may be produced and used. Most importantly, services production and operation to standards enable interoperability. Furthermore, as participants in the IEEE Knowledge Cafe on the planet positive 20 noted that standards may lead to interoperability between regulations used by different jurisdictions. Potentially enabling further collaboration between these jurisdictions.

In closing, I would like to thank you very much for the

opportunity to learn from the many contributions and to share what we at IEEE through our 420,000 members worldwide have undertaken in support of the WSIS Action Lines, and of course in support of sustainable development and to address the burning challenges posed by climate change.

IEEE is looking forward to continued engagement with the WSIS Forum and many participants. Thank you very much, and thank you very much for your very kind attention.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, IEEE, for being a committed partner of WSIS and engaging in the program and nominating high-level track facilitators every year. Thank you very much. We see that Huawei partner for specific activities also raised. Please, over to you.

>> HUAWEI: Thank you, Gitanjali. Good afternoon, distinguished delegates. First of all, allow me the Chairperson, Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh, under your leadership WSIS 2023 is contributing to shaping a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable digital future for all. Thanks for the Secretary-General, Director of ITU sectors, and you, Moderator, we exchanged view on various topic from ICT for green and building confidence on various security. Bridge the digital divide to various transformation, the consensus reached here will help us to accelerate the progress to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Thanks for Gitanjali, Vladimir, Lus the whole WSIS team. There are many innovations of this year. We can see open-space talk and spare stage and (?) which encourage more young people joining WSIS.

As the private-sector Members as Huawei, it's our third year to participate in WSIS as partners for specific activities. Last year, we have joined the ITU as Partner2Connect digital alliance that will bring connectivity to 120 million people in remote access in more than 80 countries by 2025. We believe that everybody should have access to the digital world, and we are proud to be part of the efforts to bridge the digital divide.

Also, the WSIS physical meeting is closing, but the workshop will continue in April and May. We are looking forward to continuing to exchange views with all stakeholders online. Thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Huawei. We see Ambassador, F, please, the floor is yours, please.

>> Ambassador F: Thank you for giving us the floor, allow me to take it in French. (no English translation).

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Thank you for partnering with us this year and also for organizing the

reception and highlighting the importance of multilingualism this year.

We also have, I can see Rwanda raised their hand. Over to you, Rwanda.

>> RWANDA: Honorable delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it's a honor to address you on behalf of Rwanda, the Rwanda regulatory authority, and partner to the WSIS process, and as we come to the end of the WSIS Forum, I would like to take this opportunity to express our continued support to the WSIS process. Over the years, we have witnessed the significant impact of the WSIS process on the Global ICT landscape. The WSIS process has brought together stakeholders from across the world to address key challenges facing the ICT sector and to work towards a common vision of a more inclusive and equitable digital future. We are proud to have been a part of this session, and we remain committed to supporting the WSIS process in its efforts to harness the potential of ICT for sustainable development. We recognize the critical role that ICTs can play in advancing sustainable develop am goals and building a more resilient and prosperous world. We pledge to continue to work with other stakeholders to support the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines and to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of the digital revolution.

Furthermore, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the WSIS Forum 2023 organizers, whose exceptional leadership, dedication and tireless efforts have been instrumental in making this event a resounding success and driving the WSIS process forward toward a brighter digital future for all. I thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Rwanda, also for your dedication and commitment to the WSIS process. Japan?

>> JAPAN: Thank you, Gitanjali. On behalf of the Japanese Delegation, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the stakeholders involved for this accessible WSIS Forum 2023. Japan would like to reiterate that the WSIS process has made great progress together with the involvement of multistakeholders while contributing to the achievement of SDGs.

On the other hand, 2.7-billion people are still unconnected to the Internet, and it is necessary to realize universal connectivity and more inclusive manner for LDCs, women, and youth.

Regarding WSIS + 20 review, it is critical to advance our collective efforts in a more inclusive manner with multistakeholder participation as well, and Japan would like to contribute to coming discussions.

In terms of the Global Digital Compact, Japan is of the view that ITU's active contribution in this process is vital. Such contribution may include working closely with the United Nations Tech Envoy and reflecting outcomes of the WSIS leveraging ITU's accumulated knowledge and expertise as the United Nations Specialized Agency for ICTs.

Lastly Japan is hosting IGF 2023 in Kyoto and we look forward to your participation.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you. Saudi Arabia, a Gold Plus Partner.

>> SAUDI ARABIA: Thank you, Gitanjali. Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I thank the Secretary-General of the ITU, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the WSIS and everyone involved in organizing and making the forum a success. It was indeed a great pleasure for us to be with such distinguished and experienced individuals with a common vision of achieving WSIS objectives and we look forward for more fruitful cooperation and achievements. Thank you for all of your contributions and commitment in building a better future for all through ICTs. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Saudi Arabia and for your commitment to the WSIS process. I do see that there were a few cards raised before. I think I saw -- ISOC over to you.

>> ISOC: Thank you, Gitanjali. Distinguished panelists and participants, it was a great pleasure for me and my team of the Internet society to be here for the whole week. This was the first WSIS Forum that we participated in person since the pandemic hit the world, and I have to say that we enjoyed every single day as we had been able to learn a lot, network a lot, and very importantly, to meet friends old and new.

On behalf of the Internet society, I thank ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD and all other partners as the WSIS Forum Secretariat and WSIS Forum Secretariat for having worked tirelessly for many months so that we can have such a great forum. Thank you for every participant who worked to make this event a truly multistakeholder Forum where all ideas have their place.

The WSIS Forum is an important event where we take stock of what we have achieved to accomplish our commitment that we did here in Geneva over two decades ago. We have achieved a lot, but there are still much to do to create an inclusive information society. As some of you mentioned, there are 2.7-billion people still not connected, and I hope that we'll continue to work together in the coming months and years so

that we can decide together on our common future as we did 20 years ago for the benefit of humanity. The world needs us to work together more than ever before. Thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much.

>> iFIP: Thank you, Gitanjali. Deputy Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen, we're grateful to see genuine progress in the WSIS process, but also grateful that at the same time the regional principles have been maintained. Empowering and enabling the information society. It's been a genuine learning experience, and we've appreciated the focus on sustainability, ethics, and emerging technologies, all much which will aid the achievement of the SDGs and the Action Lines.

We look forward to the Global Digital Compact and the Summit of the Future. Finally, congratulations to Gitanjali and her team. I think you do an amazing job. As I said in an email earlier, you rock. Thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you. I see India raised their hand.

>> INDIA: Thank you, Gitanjali. At the outset, I'm Rajesh from the Permanent Mission of India. At the outset let me congratulate the ITU for very vibrant representation at the WSIS event with widespread participation from government, private sector, Civil Society, academia, special mention to be made of Tomas and Gitanjali, both of whom are here. We are able to see you at so many events simultaneously, even if we thought you had new technology by which you are able to be present simultaneously in many places. Your energy was amazing.

We heard the delegation from the capital and more importantly also provided opportunity for the Ambassadors who are here in Geneva on the opening day in which they could actually, you know, express their hearts.

We saw very important topics being discussed, among them the innovation, Global Digital Compact, ICT for development, SDGs, and the WSIS Action Lines. So, India is fully committed to deepening our relationships with ITU, our area office at New Delhi is coming up next week and on 22 of March being inaugurated by President in presence of the Secretary-General, and we're also going to host WTSA next year in which we want to see our friends, many of our friends who are here, we'll definitely surely be there at WTSA next year.

And I am thankful to ITU for giving an opportunity to India for organizing the yoga events. We could see it was heartening to see good participation. It was in the theme of well-being and relaxation and next year we hope also to see more participation from all the friends here. And this will

definitely be useful, not only during this week but as in the days to come. When you go back home, you'll be able to enjoy this technique and relax.

We express our commitment to WSIS process in the future, and thank you very much for giving us the opportunity. Thank you.

(Applause).

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you for providing us with those relaxation sessions. They were indeed very, very relaxing. We have Digital Coalition. Over to you.

>> Digital Coalition.: Hi, everybody. Distinguished participants, from Digital Coalition NGO with UN ECOSOC status from Gabon, Cameroon, France, and Germany. Since more than a decade, we have been contributing to the WSIS Forum, thanks to ITU leadership and I need to recognize also Gitanjali organizational memory. The focus of the Digital Coalition is attract, maintain, and remain women in STEM. Attraction means onboarding more and more women in stem. Retain is making sure they stay their professional career in STEM. And maintain is making sure that they grow in their professional career until they reach the top like the Secretary-General of ITU.

We do recognize and appreciate the ITU's tremendous work in this sense. We have to stress the fact that the world transformation requires new digital skills, and we're missing millions of engineers worldwide. And in Africa, it's 2.5-million engineers requests that are needed in the coming years. Those are some figures and facts from UNESCO.

As to achieve the SDGs, we need to emphasize the needs for more and more engineers and especially women and female engineers so that we have to join to attract more and more female in STEM. This is the only way to make sure that all actions that are taken during these kind of events and other UN events are coming to an achievement and realization.

This is also how EQUALS or girls in ICT days or some of our more specific activities of the Digital Coalition like heart-felt girl or campaign for work too, but we still need to push for work, so I really wanted to have everyone here really take that in mind and really make it as a specification that we really need more and more engineers and female engineers. Because like Antonio Robins said the only impossible journey is the one you never begin. Thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you. Ambassador, please, you raised your flag.

>> Ambassador: Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, excellencies, good afternoon. First of all a special recognition to the ITU Secretariat, the Secretary-General, our Deputy Tomas, you're doing great, really, we saw you and met

you in Romania a few months ago. This Forum has been not only successful, but it has a definite impact to join academia, governments, to join the business sector. We also commend the Secretary-General for trying to involve Ambassadors here in Geneva because sometimes our work -- or the work that Civil Society, private sector, academia and others is sometimes not directly involved or not directly reflected here in Geneva, so this is something very helpful and we encourage your team to continue in that path.

Allow me simple where to reiterate the Peru's interest to continue to participating especially in two groups or two areas of including cooperation, which are development of a green approach to ICT and the metaverse. Those are issues that are being very well developed here in this Forum, and we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

We are a country which is struggling to strengthen participation here in the ITU. You have so many working groups, so many forums, focus groups, et cetera, and we're doing fine with leader by leader progressively, and this has been a very useful for our delegation in this regards. Thank you so much.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Ambassador and excellency from Peru. Thank you for joining the Ambassador roundtable. It was indeed very impactful. One or two more. Please, sir, the floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Madam Chair. Secretary-General, ITU, ladies and gentlemen, I should start by thanking you all for very successful WSIS this week. I speak on behalf of all of Vanuatu, men, women, boy, girls, whole community to express our heartfelt thanks to you. Vanuatu is very far in the Pacific, a tiarany of smallness, vastness in the Pacific, and with climate change risk that we face everyday. Regretfully, Vanuata delegates (?) couldn't come all the way to Geneva. The conversations at this Forum have been very useful. The challenges for us all on issues of ICT and environment and infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital skills and literacy development and many more issues have been raised during the week. It was very useful.

Secondly, I would like to express to the Vanuatu team of Smart Sisters was awarded a champion prize, and on their behalf I thank the ITU family for recognizing the Vanuatu Smart Sisters program in building capacity for young girls. Our challenge, my challenge to the WSIS is to ensure that we incorporate all the issues discussed here into a development agenda, and also into the work of the ITU and make them even better. I thank you, Chair.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Ambassador, excellency,

for your intervention. We do not see anymore raised hands or flags.

Colleagues, this is the last chance before we close the floor. Okay, so we would like to invite our Deputy Secretary-General to please close the WSIS Forum 2023 Hybrid Event.

>> TOMAS LAMANAUSKAS: Thank you, everyone. It's great to hear so much enthusiastic feedback of the Forum, and indeed it will be a very good ground for the next year. Before I hit the gavel, we still have a few people. First of all, our excellent Chairperson, Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh for her really excellent leadership of this event and we'll be looking forward to her leadership in the coming years as well as her role will continue. Also our partners without whom of course wouldn't have been possible to have the event here, so of course our Platinum Partner United Arab Emirates, thank you very much.

(Applause).

Our Gold Plus partner, Saudi Arabia, thank you very much for your support.

(Applause).

Our partners for specific activities of Japan, Huawei and Institute of Electric and Electronic Engineers, IEEE, thank you. Contributing partners, kingdom of barani, Republic of Rwanda, Swiss federation, United Kingdom, ICANN and Internet society.

(Applause).

And our supporting partners of General Delegation of.brussels in Belgium, international federation of information processing, an organization. Thank you very much, everyone.

(Applause).

This is now my pleasure on behalf of the Secretary-General to actually offer the last words and hit the gavel. Thank you very much and see you next year and online.

(Applause).

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