UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Chief Executives Board Joint Statement to the United Nations General Assembly on the Overall Review of the Implementation of World Summit on the Information Society Outcomes

We, the Chief Executives of organizations of the United Nations system, witnessing the momentous events taking place, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the ongoing United Nations General Assembly Overall Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in two phases in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), reaffirm the important role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) as a critical enabler for advancing the globally agreed development goals, in particular in the context of the new development framework in resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which acknowledges that "the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress... and to develop knowledge societies" and contains targets on use of ICTs for the empowerment of women, for education and on access to ICTs for least developed countries (LDCs).

Though access to advanced technologies has grown at a fast pace since the celebration of WSIS, the impressive gains observed during the era of the Millennium Development Goals are still hampered by existing gaps in ICT access – between and within countries, between urban and rural settings, among men and women, and boys and girls. A major digital divide is still in place, with more people offline than online and particularly poor access in vulnerable developing nations, which include LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). The WSIS vision remains valid and we therefore commit ourselves collectively to reinvigorate collaborative action to harness the power of new technologies in promoting sustainable development and making the goal of universal and affordable access to ICTs and knowledge a reality. This should include also a new focus on relevant content, skills, capacity building, and an enabling environment, including multilingualism, to empower the implementation of the sustainable development goals, as well as to further freedom of expression and to promote cultural diversity on the basis of human rights.

In the national development process, use of ICTs need to be systematically integrated into development plans. Renewed efforts should be made to ensure that the enabling ICT dimension is adequately reflected in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and equivalent documents as well as in poverty reduction strategies.

Coherence across the United Nations system in the implementation of multiple goals and commitments is essential. In this regard, we reaffirm the role of United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS)[1] as the inter-agency coordination mechanism for issues related to the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS and call on UNGIS to include in its strategic priority the alignment between WSIS implementation and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We also recognize the WSIS Forum has evolved as an efficient mechanism for multi-stakeholder implementation of WSIS action lines and cross-cutting commitments on gender equality, information exchange, knowledge creation and the sharing of best practices. Beyond 2015, it can serve as a key forum for discussing the role of ICTs as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, with due regard to the global mechanism for follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as set out in General Assembly resolution A/70/1.

As Chief Executives of the United Nations system, we look forward to the successful outcomes of United Nations General Assembly's Overall Review of the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes and we pledge our collective support for their implementation.

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[1] See Annex One for a list of UNGIS members.

ANNEX ONE: Background on UNGIS and the CEB

In April 2006, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) established the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) as the inter-agency mechanism for coordinating substantive policy issues related to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The Group aims to promote policy coherence and programme coordination across the UN system, and to provide guidance on issues related to inclusive information and knowledge societies as well as the strategic use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in support of internationally agreed development goals.

Since its inception, UNGIS has played an important role in the WSIS process, including by forging collaboration and partnerships among CEB members to achieve WSIS objectives. It helped to keep ICT and science and technology issues at the top of the UN Agenda, and advocating for the implementation of ICT for development solutions in the programmes of CEB members. The overall goals have been to achieve more coordinated actions, greater coherence and effectiveness in the UN's overall support to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. A number of joint UNGIS thematic activities, meetings, open consultations, events and joint statements are highlighted in Annex Two.

The need for coherent implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments

Rapid growth of ICT adoption and use over the past ten years and the mainstreaming of ICTs into everyday life, make the link between ICTs and sustainable development increasingly central. With the adoption of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, coherence across the system in the implementation of multiple goals and commitments is essential. In the case of the interface between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the WSIS Outcomes, UNGIS offers a unique platform for achieving such transversal coherence.

The need to harness all available knowledge, partnerships and tools for increasingly complex global challenges

The potential of ICTs as key enablers of development, and as critical components of innovative development solutions, is fully recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking into account the importance of relevant content, skills and an enabling environment, ICTs, including broadband Internet, mobile technologies and relevant ICT applications and services, are recognized as tools that can help empower people, enable wider exercise of human rights including freedom of expression, foster access to information and knowledge, open up employment and decent work opportunities, promote cultural diversity, expand access to learning, scientific knowledge and basic services.

WSIS and the SDGs

The new development framework *"Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"* contains 17 goals and 169 targets. The Declaration acknowledges that "the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential

to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy".

Some of the targets explicitly recognize the role of ICTs. This applies to the targets on Education and scholarships (4.b) on Gender empowerment (5.b) and on Infrastructure for Universal and Affordable access to ICTs and the Internet in the Least Developed Countries (9.c). There are also several references to technology in general in which ICTs play an important role, including with regards to climate change, cities, economic growth and decent work for all, energy and water efficiencies, early warning systems, environmentally sound technologies, programmes of action for the LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs, regional integration and interconnectivity.

More broadly, the goal to Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development (17) calls to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICTs, and underlines the need to enhance international cooperation on and access to technology, including through improved coordination, in particular at the UN system level, in collaboration with other stakeholders. For example, effective use of ICTs will help the global community to end extreme poverty (1) and hunger (2) by creating new economic opportunities, expanding financial inclusion, and strengthening food security. Moreover, ICTs are facilitating participatory governance and transparency (16) for peace and justice. They are also transforming the delivery of healthcare (3) through low-cost tele-health applications that provide healthcare access for the poor as well as new sensors and devices that improve health outcomes through the monitoring and analysis of healthcare data. On their own, ICTs cannot solve the development challenges, but they are crucial enablers.

Members of UNGIS
FAO, IAEA, ILO, ITU*, OECD, UN Women, UNCTAD**, UNDESA, UNDP*, UNECA, UNECE, UNECLAC, UNESCAP, UNESCO*, UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNODC, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WB, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

**UNGIS' 2015-2016 Chair
* UNGIS' 2015-2016 Vice-chairs

ANNEX TWO: Examples of UNGIS activities since 2006

- Open Consultations on Financing Mechanisms for Meeting the Challenges of ICT for Development (2009);
- Special High-Level Event at the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs, focusing on Harnessing Information and Communication Technologies for Development (2010);
- High-Level Event at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (2012);
- Advocacy campaign on strengthening the ICT component in the UN Development Assistance Framework. Special letter addressed to the UN resident coordinators were issued highlighting the necessity of reflecting ICT component in the United Nations Development Action Framework (UNDAF). (2013)
- Joint initiatives in the areas of mobile for development, child online protection, open access to scientific information and connectivity; (multiple years)
- Joint contribution to the Rio+20 preparatory process (2012);
- Joint statement to the preparatory process of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, resulting in reflection of ICT component in the outcomes of the SDG Summit (2013);
- Open Consultation for an Action Plan on the WSIS Ten-Year Review, which served as the basis for the subsequent review process (2013);
- Endorsement of the WSIS-SDG Matrix, developed by WSIS Action Line Facilitators, creating a clear and direct link and an explicit connection between the key aim of the WSIS Action Lines, that of harnessing the potential of ICTs for development, and the various SDGs and related targets. (2015);

As an integral part of the WSIS Forum, the UNGIS each year organizes two meetings i.e. UNGIS High-Level Meeting the heads of UN Agencies, and the UNGIS Working-Level Meeting where yearly work plans are developed and endorsed.