



OPENING REMARKS

BY

MR. BRAHIMA SANOU

DIRECTOR, TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU (BDT)

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

ITU EUROPE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM

25 NOVEMBER 2013, BELGRADE, SERBIA

“FOSTERING GROWTH AND INNOVATION IN THE ICT” ECOSYSTEM”

- **Honorable Stefan Lazarevic, State Secretary , Republic of Serbia**
- **Honorable Deputy Ministers from Republic of Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Undersecretary of Republic of Poland,**
- **Heads of Regulators**
- **Other Heads of delegations**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning to you all and welcome!

It gives me great pleasure and honor to be here in Belgrade. Before going any further, I would like to express our deep gratitude to Honorable Stefan Lazarevic, the Government and the people of Serbia for the very warm welcome and the hospital extended to all of us and for the excellent facilities put our disposal.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Regional Development Forum (RDF) is an event aimed at providing a platform for information and best practices sharing on opportunities and challenges in the region with respect to policy, regulatory, investment and business issues. It is about open dialogue amongst stakeholders composing the ICT ecosystem.

This region shows sustained increases in all key ICT services and penetration rates are above the global level. Mobile broadband has been the fastest growing market segment over the past few years, with annual growth rates above 25 per cent.

Mobile-cellular telephone penetration is estimated to reach 126 per cent by end 2013, thus being above the global value of 96 per cent and in line with the value of developed countries that is 128 per cent.

At the end of 2012, a total of 34 countries out of the region's 42 countries had reached penetration levels of 100 per cent and above.

Fixed (wired)-broadband penetration in Europe is estimated to reach 27 per cent by end 2013, almost three times the global value of 10 per cent, and by far the highest of all regions (the second highest being the Americas, with an estimated 17 per cent).

Distinguished Guests,

In the 21st century, coordinated efforts are needed as no single organization could single-handedly develop society, particularly in the field of ICTs.

Equally important, is the fact that no individual, no community, and no nation should be left out of the information society. Universal Access for equal opportunity for all should therefore be our guiding principle.

Most importantly, it is about people. People, because without personal and institutional relationships, there is very little that we could achieve. Financing and partnerships are possible when people talk to each other.

Sharing of knowledge and know-how requires people. To make that knowledge meaningful and beneficial to countries, communities and households, it must be people-oriented. Let us together put a human face on ICTs.

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this RDF is: **Fostering Growth and Innovation in the ICT Ecosystem**. This theme says it all. Our primary goal is not just to develop and deploy technologies. Our aim is to make a difference to the ordinary people and ultimately establish networked Knowledge Societies.

While broadband infrastructure development remains a priority today, we are also focusing on making sure that ICTs are used as a delivery vehicle for health, education, banking, and business in order to achieve sustainable social and economic growth. We need therefore to go beyond the ICT sector and embrace the ICT ecosystem.

But again, this has to happen in a safe environment. Securing the information highway remains a big challenge for us all.

Europe, building upon its already high ICT penetration levels, is progressing in bringing ICTs to the share of the population not yet connected and thus advancing towards an inclusive information society. The private sector is very active across the region. The regulatory regime is quite impressive too.

All these factors point to the fact that the strategic idea of seeking **to foster growth and innovation in the ICT Ecosystem** is possible, attainable, and achievable in Europe. This is what this RDF seeks to achieve.

For this to happen, we also need to promote a generation of innovators and content developers to serve the needs of the productive sectors by capitalizing on the existing critical of infrastructure such as mobile technology.

In this regard I am pleased to inform you that I recently launched three initiatives to support such efforts: the **m-Powering Development initiative**, the **Smart Sustainable Development Model initiative** and the **ITU Academy initiative**.

The outcomes of the Regional Development Forum will certainly inspire the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the European Region to the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-14).

In conclusion, I would like once again, to welcome you to this Regional Development Forum for Europe. For those who will be with us in the RPM tomorrow, we will have another opportunity to continue with our conversation, exchange of ideas

Thank you for your attention and

I wish you fruitful discussions.