HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND"

GENERAL DEBATE

ITU STATEMENT

Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

- The theme of this high level political forum is '*ensuring that no one is left behind'*.

- And yet, unless things change very dramatically, we risk leaving billions of the world's people behind – and perhaps as many as half of all the world's people.

- Everyone in this room is on-line, and so is everyone following remotely

- Here in New York, in 2016, that is only to be expected; we all use the Internet, every day, and we all benefit from the wealth of information and knowledge that we find there.

- But half of the world's people are still offline. That's more than 3.5 billion people.

- In the world's least developed countries, the LDCs, hardly one person in ten is online, with 90% of LDC populations completely unconnected.

- Goal 9c of the Sustainable Development Agenda calls for us to "*significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal and affordable access to Internet in LDCs by 2020*".

- At current rates of progress, we will only reach 20% of people in LDCs by 2020.

- Not 100%, but 20%.

- Without universal and affordable access to the Internet, we have no chance of achieving any of the 17 SDGs.

- Access to and use of ICTs will be crucial in helping us to address the many issues raised in the Secretary General's report on SDG progress such as:

  - The 60 million children of primary school age who are not attending school today;

  - The 38 million deaths annually from non-communicable diseases;

  - The 950 million people globally who live with no means of sanitation whatever.

  - The 50% of the children in sub-saharan Africa under the age of five who do not have registered births.

- We have to do more – much, much more – to address this issue and to make sure that everyone, everywhere, understands the importance of ICTs, and their transformative potential in making the world a better place for all.

- We need to do more to get the world connected, and to bring the benefits of that connectivity to people wherever they live, and whatever their means.

- We need to make sure that hospitals are connected to outlying clinics, and that clinics are connected to patients.

- We need to make sure that universities are connected to schools, and that schools are connected to students of all ages.

- And we need to make sure that governments are connected to the people they serve.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- These are all goals that we believe are perfectly achievable, and that we can see achieved within the framework of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

- And if we succeed – and we believe we will – then truly no one will have been left behind.

Thank you for your attention.