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PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE 2022

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

FIRST PLENARY

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

14:30 EEST

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(Technical issue with registration for captioners, resolved at coffee break.)

>> CHAIR: Dear colleagues, welcome back. Please take your seats. We'll start in 1 minute.

We'll now start. Please take your seats dear colleagues. We'll start with number 15 on our agenda, general policy statements.

Allow me to explain the procedure first.

Speakers will deliver their addresses from the podium. The policy statement team has been in touch with everyone so you should know when you will be speaking. I would kindly ask the upcoming speakers to proceed to these red chairs in the front so as to be able to quickly access the podium after the previous speaker has finished. Once speakers have finished, they are requested to pause for a quick photo in front of the backdrop over here, the right side of the podium. I remind you that policy statements are limited to three minutes. Please stay within 3 minutes if possible.

The timer will be visible on the screen behind me. If you need any assistance, please contact the policy statement team here in the front of the room. Are there any questions.

Everything is clear? Good. Let's begin.

It's my pleasure to invite a good friend of mine, the Ministry of research, innovation and digitization from Romania, Mr. Sebastian Burduja.

>> SEBASTIAN BURDUJA: Mr. Chair, honored guests, I will try not to repeat my earlier speech. It is challenging to be in this role and stick to the 3 minute role than it was yesterday in the Ministerial Roundtable when I had to moderate.

Let me say thank you, again, to the ITU Secretary‑General, leadership team, the whole staff for putting this together as well as from my colleagues in Romania and last but not least, our Chairman Sabin Sarmas, a great friend and wonderful promoter of this cause. Earlier on he put on the screen a big word, the word "dream". It is a dream come true for this City of Bucharest, this country of Romania, to host you all, to host this landmark event. We would like you to remember Bucharest not just for its hospitality, and hopefully the impactful organization, but also for the growth that is achieved here and that depends on us all.

I will briefly explain the context of Romania's Digital Transformation and put forth a few thoughts on best practices and hopefully joint efforts. First of all, let me say it is a manifestation of highest level of commitment. From our President Klaus Iohannis to the leader of our government, Nicolae Ceausescu, they all strongly support the country's Digital Transformation, the Priority 0, and I think that shows.

Second of all, it is the recognition that the digitally transformed nation, you need an integrated strategy. It is not enough to just have the Stills, the upskilling, the reselling, it is not enough to just have new technology, not enough to just have fast internet speeds, it is not enough to just have digital public services.

We have embarked on massive, ambitious Digital Transformation for our country which includes a governmental Cloud close to 600 million euro investment, interoperability, and Mr. Sarmas was fundamental in passing a breakthrough law changing the paradigm to tell state institutions that they don't own the data, the citizens, indeed, own their data.

Also, we are pushing forward with a national coalition for building skills for the future, especially digital skills, especially for senior citizens, for those citizens that may be marginalized, who may not readily benefit from this important progress. We also have a very strong local market, a strong partnership with the private sector. 220,000 employees in our IT&C sector, 7 to 8% of GDP, very productive key for our country. Many come from the STEM areas, the sciences and we're committed at the highest level to push even higher with this percentage. 23%, almost a quarter are female, making Romania a best practice example in this regard.

There's a functioning, thriving ecosystem, including national, public research constitutes, national universities, the government and, of course, the private sector. I absolute again the Bucharest declaration of yesterday, and thank you all for the strong support.

Just to reiterate, we stand through this declaration for an open, global, interoperable, reliable, secure internet for all that leads to equitable use and bridging the digital divide. I wish you all great success in the days and weeks to come, and I'm very thankful for this opportunity to make Romania the host country and look forward to many productive debates.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you Romania, thank you, Minister. Thank you again for your energy put in organizing this wonderful event.

I invite the next country to take the floor, which is Saudi Arabia. His Excellency,

Mr. Abdullah Alswaha, please, you have the floor, Your Excellency.

>> ABDULLAH ALSWAHA: Thank you for the warm welcome in this wonderful City of Bucharest.

Ladies and gentlemen, today we are aware of many challenges linked to food security, supply chains, and the COVID‑19 pandemic. All these challenges have a solution that is in our hands and in this room. We must work to find this solution. It is important today, now that we're recalling what happened in the last four year, important to look towards the future and the next four years will require courageous, rapid decisions. In Saudi Arabia we launched the national digital plan and this national plan led to social program while protecting planet earth. We considered the social aspects to empower women and youth in particular.

In Saudi Arabia we have achieved significant growth which went from 7% to almost 30%, and therefore we exceeded the European G20.

With regard to youth and entrepreneurship, it is applied by a factor of 3 and for women, the empowerment rate and entrepreneurship rate, it has increased by a factor of 3 as well.

This year, we managed to exceed what we achieved in the last three years. These are very significant social achievements that show that the Digital World is welcoming for youth and for the coming generations and for our children.

At the economic level, we have developed $3 billion in investment, which have led to a package of incentives. This attracted the private sector, the Saudi Arabian market is the largest in the region to date, exceeding 48 billion dollar, and we ensure the link between various regional countries and through our partnership with the ITU we have committed to connect the world, those that are not yet connected. We have managed to reach 3.5 ‑‑ to reach 3.5 billion households that are now connected to the internet and we are among the ten first countries in terms of the internet speed.

We have invested several billion dollars as world leaders in energy, we invested almost 5 billion dollars in green hydrogen and renewable energy, we are, therefore, becoming not only leaders in terms of energy but also energy of the future through hydrogen.

In conclusion, there is, of course, a digital divide in the world and it is up to us at this Plenipotentiary Conference to make a commitment to work together and to join forces in order to move forward.

I thank you for your attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you Your Excellencies, Minister of communications and information technology and thank you, Saudi Arabia, for hosting the last regional meeting for preparation for the Plenipotentiary Conference.

The next country, Burkina Faso, I invite Her Excellency,

Ms. Aminata Zerbo/Sabane, Ministre de la Transition digitale des postes et des communications Ã©lectroniquesMinistÃ¨re de la Transition digitale des postes et des communications.

Your Excellencies, you have the floor.

>> AMINATA ZERBO/SABANE: Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

At the outset, I express my gratitude to the highest authorities of Romania and the people for their warm welcome. I congratulate the Romanian government and the ITU for organizing this very important could be presence, the Plenipotentiary Conference.

Allow me, Mr. Chair, to congratulate you and your Bureau and to pay tribute to the outgoing executive team, ladies and gentlemen, Burkina Faso has chosen to respond to Digital Transformation by putting the sector at the heart of all its development benchmarks. Burkina Faso undertook audacious reform to develop the digital infrastructure and this by implementing guiding digital strategy leading to the expansion of the internet network across the country, adopting regulations that ensures deployment of the infrastructure as well as with the isolation of certain households and we have looked at the access and digital Universal Fund, a guarantee of successful digital transportation.

We have set up a business environment to promote local entrepreneurship and to empower young people and build competence at a large level. Strengthening capacity, good governance, transparency in our ICT sector, it is an important decision taken by the government and the achievement and purpose has been seen and we have a lot of promising opportunities for public institutions and companies and individuals. Ladies and gentlemen, the development impetus has been and the last few years, the systematic destruction of ICT infrastructure have a serious impact on our infrastructure and isolate tried and tested population. Despite this difficult situation, this Conference is an opportunity for us to reassure the PP members that we remain committed to promoting digital development and the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations. It is an important document. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this gives me an opportunity to remind you that Burkina Faso is putting forward once again our candidacy for the Council for the next period. I urge you to give us your vote to finish our work and I lack forward to working with the Conference and long live the international cooperation and long live the ITU.

I thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Burkina Faso. Thank you, Your Excellency.

The next country, Japan, I invite His Excellency Mr. Yoshifumi Tsuge to take the floor and address the Plenary.

Your Excellencies, you have the floor.

>> YOSHIFUMI TSUGE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to make a speech at this Conference today here as delegation head of Japan.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I express gratitude to the efforts by ITU Secretary‑General Mr. Houlin Zhao and the ITU Secretariat for their preparations, as well as express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Romania for making this conference possible.

I would also like to express my congratulations to Mr. Sabin Sarmas on his election as the Chair of this Conference.

The COVID‑19 pandemic has highlighted that digital networks are an essential social infrastructure for the continuation of economic and social activities.

While the use of ICT in daily life such as e‑health advances, it is also used in various services on the industrial front, such as manufacturing and agriculture, thus giving birth to new businesses.

On the other hand, technological innovation in ICT is accelerating, and standardization has become more important than ever in order to spread new technologies around the world. For this reason, the role of the Telecommunications Standardization Bureau is becoming more and more important.

We have nominated Mr. ONOE Seizo to be Director of Telecommunication Standardization Bureau in the election being held at this Plenipotentiary Conference.

Technology development is usually mainly carried out by private companies. Mr. Onoe has placed himself at the very forefront of industry for a long time and has abundant achievements in standardization activities and a lot of experience in corporate management. Mr. Onoe is the very person to be a leader in this new era, and as the director of the telecommunications standardization bureau, he would be able to quickly bring the benefits of ICT to the world, bridging between the ITU, governments and private companies. Together with Mr. Onoe, we are considering preparing a fund and we would like to have your warm support for Mr. Onoe.

We have 2.9 billion people who are not connected and we're considering creating a forum for a new ecosystem for 2020 and we have created with the ITU launched the Connect2Recover project to strengthen digital infrastructure, and has contributed more than 1 million US dollars so far.

In addition, it is important to develop human resources in order to sustainably develop the digital environment. For this reason, this year Japan plans to invest a total of 2.2 million US dollars in training for government officials for the early deployment of emerging technologies.

Japan would like to continue to commit itself to financial support for 30 units and promote efforts to improve global connectivity. Japan is running for re‑election as a member of the Council, thus we would like to ask for your support in that election.

Finally, Japan will also be contributing to this Plenipotentiary Conference as much as possible in order to add to the success of this three‑week conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, State Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications.

The next country is Czech Republic, represented by His Excellency Petr Ocko.

You have the floor.

>> PETR OCKO: Excellencies, Mr. Secretary General, Mr. Chair, Directors, Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government of the Czech Republic, I would like to thank the Government of Romania and the representatives of the International Telecommunication Union for preparing this Conference.

The outputs of the Plenipotentiary Conference will beyond doubt once again constitute a steering beacon for all the Membership of the ITU in fulfilling the main ITU goals over the coming time period.

Since we're the President of the European Union, I have the honor to speak on behalf of the 27 EU Members, so together 54 states, and we would like to mention the following.

Since we last met at the ITU Plenipotentiary conference four years ago, telecommunications/ICTs have expanded and developed at a tremendous pace, unlocking great opportunities for humanity and the world, but also generating new challenges to governments and societies. We are particularly concerned about the persistent digital divides that further exacerbate social and economic inequalities around the world.

Now more than ever we need a strong, impactful, and efficient Union providing core expertise in the domains of radio communications, telecommunication/ICT standards, and bridging the digital divide, including with regard to gender, age and persons with specific needs. The Union should contribute to the digital transformation that puts humans at the centre, empowers individuals and provides meaningful connectivity.

To this end, we promote a human rights‑based approach to the whole life cycle of telecommunication/ICT technologies – including design, development, deployment, use and disposal – as a part of a human‑centric vision of the digital transformation, including in international standard‑setting processes.

In this light, we should work together to achieve a digital transformation based on openness, inclusion, equality, sustainability, resilience and security. We encourage the ITU, as a member of the UN family and working with other Standard Development Organisations to develop international telecommunication/ICT standards that are consistent with existing international frameworks on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We welcome other UN efforts in this direction, in particular the Human Rights Council Resolution on new and emerging digital technologies and human rights that calls for consultations with standard development organizations on human rights and telecommunications/ICTs.

It is equally important that the ITU, which builds upon the expertise of various stakeholders, including industry, SMEs, and academia, redoubles its efforts to make its procedures more transparent and accessible, including to organizations active on human rights aspects of telecommunications/ICTs. Forging consensus and making sure that all stakeholders are heard forms a critical part of the ITU´s work.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the vision of future activity of the ITU. As for the Czech Republic, building upon a long‑lasting participation and co‑operation, we seek for your support in the upcoming elections to the ITU Council.

Let me wish this Plenipotentiary Conference fruitful discussions and the full success!

Thank you for your attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Czech Republic. I invite United States, Mr. Don grave, deputy Secretary of Commerce to take the floor. Excellency, you have the floor.

>> DON GRAVES: Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon colleagues.

Chair, ITU Secretary‑General and other elected officials, excellencies, distinguished delegates, it is a great pleasure to be with you for the 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference. And it is a great honor to deliver the national statement on behalf of the United States of America.

First, I would like to offer my congratulations to the Chair on his appointment to lead this conference and convey my sincere thanks to the Government of Romania for the very warm welcome that the U.S. delegation has received here in Bucharest.

When the Plenipotentiary Conference last convened in Dubai in 2018, no one could have envisioned what the next four years would look like. The COVID‑19 pandemic is a tragedy on a global scale. We are relieved and thankful to have held two successful conferences this year alone and to be together again for the Plenipotentiary Conference with our colleagues and friends.

In the past four years, we have witnessed remarkable progress, as well as challenges, on global telecommunication issues.

First, the pandemic highlighted the importance and necessity of affordable and meaningful connectivity and access to digital technologies. We watched social and economic activity move online.

But we still need to take greater strides together, in our home countries and here in the ITU to ensure all our citizens are connected. Online school only works if teachers and children have the right digital tools. Digital government services rely on resilient infrastructure and training.

Unfortunately, we face the current challenges resulting from the war in Ukraine. Leaders, developed and undeveloped, north and south have spoken about the consequences of this war and the need to end it. They have called on all of us to reaffirm our commitment to the UN charter and its core principles, including sovereignty, territorial integrity and Human Rights. Together in the global community we can make enormous progress, we can do this when we all work in peace together. This includes Connecting the Unconnected and improving both the level and quality of telecommunications and ICTs. For example, since the last Plenipotentiary, 0% more people around the world have connected, many in Developing Countries. That is great news and something we should celebrate but there is a lot more for us to do.

United States is committed to making further progress on these issues at home and abroad and in our own country we're working to ensure that every American has access to affordable high speed internet to invest in resilient infrastructure and more secure networks and to use technologies aligning with our values. We're also committed to working with the international community to achieve universal, affordable connectivity to close digital divides, including the gender digital divide to equip people with digital skills to promote a secure and resilient digital environment and to leverage ICTs to tackle challenges like food security and Climate Change.

To support this work, I am pleased to announce that the United States plans to increase our assessed contribution rate to the ITU from 30 contributory units to 35 contributory units at this Plenipotentiary Conference. That increase represents an additional 1.59 million Swiss francs per year to support the work of the ITU.

The United States was also very excited to join the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, or P2C, recently launched at the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Kigali. In just a few months, a coalition of UN agencies, governments, and the private sector have received over 450 pledges from partners in over 100 countries – that is 26 billion USD worth of resources for the people that need it most. P2C is not just an extraordinary achievement for an international organization – it shows us what can be accomplished when we come together to tackle global problems.

Partner2Connect is one of many examples why the United States is so proud to support the leadership of Ms. Doreen Bogdan‑Martin in her campaign to become the next Secretary‑General of the ITU.

Doreen obviously needs no introduction to this body, but we can think of no better steward for the ITU No one more qualified or as visionary to lead this organization than her.

Doreen is the right person at the right time to lead the ITU. On September 29, I hope you will all support and vote for her.

We would also be honored to receive your support for our reelection to the ITU Council so that we can continue to contribute to this organization’s important work.

Together here in Bucharest, we are embarking on an important and challenging undertaking over the next few weeks to chart the ITU’s course.

“Connect and Unite” is our conference theme. These are not independent goals, but inextricably linked. We must work together to connect the unconnected.

Let us use our time together wisely, to meet, talk, and exchange views and ideas, and grow closer as a community of action, united within the ITU.

The United States looks forward to working with other ITU members here in Romania, in the United States, and worldwide. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, United States for your statement and good news for the Union. I invite now the next country, Kenya, represented by

Mr. Ezra Chiloba, Director General, Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs.

>> EZRA CHILOBA: Chairman of Plenipotentiary Conference, Mr. Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary General, elected Officials of the ITU, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the People of the Republic of Kenya, I join fellow delegates in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chair of this 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference and your able leadership of the proceedings of this event.

I also wish to commend the ITU for the hard work that has gone into the planning of this important quadrennial meeting, and to our hosts, the Government of the Republic of Romania for the meticulous planning and warm reception accorded to us in this beautiful city of Bucharest.

Excellencies, as we gather here today, we take cognisance of the work done by the ITU, in rallying member states, to enhance strategies for positioning ICTs as a key enabler of socio‑economic development. Kenya is therefore, fully in support of the Union’s two Strategic Goals of attaining “Universal Connectivity’ and “Sustainable Digital Transformation’.

Since the last Plenipotentiary Conference in 2018, Kenya has made significant strides, on the front of enhancing universal connectivity. This has been mainly facilitated through enhanced roll out of ICT infrastructure, supported by our Universal Service Fund (USF). Through such dedicated interventions, we have witnessed significant growth in the 3G/4G network coverage of our population, which currently stands at beyond 96.4 per cent up from 78 per cent in 2017.

Distinguished delegates, Kenya recently attested to the benefits of ubiquitous network connectivity in enhancing democratic efforts during our just concluded 2022 General Elections. This was clearly demonstrated when we enabled the unprecedented 100% successful online transmission of presidential elections results across all corners of the country. Even more exciting was the fact that the elections results could be accessed by anyone from anywhere around the world.

We are therefore happy to announce that Kenya is committed to consistently pursuing the targets that were set in the WTDC Partner2Connect Digital Coalition commitment. For this reason, our national ICT strategies and plans are focused on the deployment of projects that will match or even exceed our estimated commitment, to implement 258.8 million USD worth of digital transformation related projects across the country, in the next five years.

This is being driven through the implementation of our National ICT Policy – 2019, National Digital Economy Blue Print ‑ 2018 and Kenya’s National Digital Master Plan 2022‑2032. Great care was taken to ensure that all these national strategic policies and plans has set the focus on the attainment of our National Digital Transformation agenda.

Our recently launched National Digital Master Plan 2022‑2032, has committed to extend over 10,000km of fiberoptic infrastructure to over 40,000 public learning institutions, 20,000 government institutions, and 13,000 public health facilities, as well as the establishment of well above 1,450 digital innovation hubs across the country. We therefore welcome all related collaborative efforts that can hasten the attainment of these ambitious digital transformation initiatives. Indeed, together, we can do more!

Excellencies , ladies and gentlemen, to ensure that we continue to engender global conversations on ICTs, the Government of the Republic of Kenya wishes to inform you of her candidature for re‑election to the ITU Council under region D. In this regard, we submit and seek the favourable support of our bid by all Member States at this august conference.

Kenya remains at the forefront of lending its expertise and support to the activities of ITU, so that together, we can ensure that ‘No One Is Left Behind’.

As I conclude, I have the great honour of inviting all the delegates of the 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference to a lunch reception hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kenya that will take place on Wednesday, 28th September 2022 from 12:30hrs to 13:30hrs, at the Brancovenesc Saloon, here at the Palace of Parliament.

We look forward to seeing you all there. We have great coffee from Kenya set aside for you!.

Thank you for your kind attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Kenya.

As the list of countries registered for policy statements today has reached the end we will move to the last point on our agenda, which is 16, other businesses.

I invite any country to take the floor if the case. I remind you about the reception hosted by Romania from 7:30 at the Face Convention Center.

We have a Committee meeting at less than half an hour, at 5:30.

Seeing no request ‑‑ I see a request from United Arab Emirates. Please, you have the floor.

>> UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Thank you very much, Chair.

Chairman of the Plenipotentiary Conference, ladies and gentlemen, Heads of Delegation, Secretary‑General of the ITU, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to convey all my greetings to all of you. I would like to present to you on behalf of the Arab Group within the framework of the PP‑22 and at the outset I would like to convey to Romania our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for having welcomed us for this Plenipotentiary Conference. Without forgetting, of course, its warm hospitality since our arrival in this beautiful City of Bucharest, which is well‑known for its centre of arts and literature.

I would like to take this opportunity, Chairman, to congratulate you on your appointment of Chair of this Plenipotentiary Conference and we would like to wish you every success as you steer the work of this Conference over the next three weeks. On behalf of the Arab Group, we will work with you, of course, and support you to ensure that this Conference is crowned with success. I would, therefore, wish to extend you every success in your role.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, United Arab Emirates for your kind words and for all of the support given to the Union.

With this, we can declare the first Plenary of the Plenipotentiary Conference to 2022 closed.

Thank you very much.

I think also that we can start the Steering Committee right away if you agree. We can meet directly in the ‑‑ yes, please, you have the floor.

>> I would also like to announce to the delegates that a gift from Romania is available to all delegates at the distribution gift desk.

Thank you.

(Meeting concluded at 1707 EEST)

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