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>> CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. I kindly ask you to be seated so we can start the second session of the Plenary.

Dear colleagues, we will proceed with general policy statements. So please be seated. Because I'm going to invite the next country for the general policy statements, which is South Africa represented by Her Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policies, Minister of Transport and Communications. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

>> SOUTH AFRICA: Honorable Chairperson of this Plenipotentiary Conference 2022, allow me to congratulate you on your Chairmanship and express our gratitude. We are meeting here as the global collective of ICT leaders in various sectors of society, be it from Member States, industry and multilateral institutions to consider the advancement of technology in a world that was ravaged by COVID‑19, which amongst others challenged all of us to first track the deployment and advancement of technology to ensure that all have access.

In South Africa we have recommended the broadband connectivity program of our mobile telecommunications operators who see their spectrum licenses will spend on social obligations to connect all schools, health facilities, public libraries and Government centers and traditional authorities. Simultaneously the Government will invest more than 161 million U.S. dollars to deploy over the 3,000 community wide hot spots, benefitting more than 5.8 million households to enable the connectivity WiFi. The Government has published the radiofrequency policy for public consultation. It proposes timelines to switch off 2G and 3G networks while proposing time frames for conclusion of the roadmap towards the deployment.

The intention is to ensure that all South Africans ‑‑ in all of South Africa is covered. We are also working with sister countries within Africa to foster cooperation on broadband connectivity. And we will continue to provide updates. The deployment of 5G will enable us to exploit digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and blockchain to advance our economies but also to advance sustainable development. In the month of November 2022 we will launch the AI hub in partnership with Universities in South Africa. And this would be expanded to other Universities and higher education institutions in Africa to create multiple Centers of Excellence in their continent. We have launched the digital ‑‑ work to partner with other countries in Africa to complement our free trade area as part of creating digital markets.

Our commitment to the collective effort for ICT development and inclusivity is the embodiment of our candidature for ITU Council and the Radio Regulations board. We seek your support for re‑election. When you want to go fast, go alone, but when you want to go further, go with everyone else. I thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much. I will invite the next country to take the floor which is Tunisia represented by His Excellency, Mr. Nizar Ben Neji, Minister of Information and Communication Technology.

>> TUNISIA: Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the great pleasure at the outset to thank Romania and to express our appreciation for their welcome for the PP‑22. I would like to thank the ITU for its efforts to assist decision makers on ICTs. We are for harmony's development of ICTs. And that's the major reason we are working together today to tackle these challenges.

This is why we adopted in Tunisia our national digital strategy. This is focused on the following points, developing our regulatory framework and adjusting governance in line with international standards, digital financial inclusion and reducing the digital divide.

Thirdly, developing financial structures by broadening telecommunication networks and also by developing national data centers. Fourthly, by ensuring the digital transformation through e‑portals which is simplified so the citizens can use them.

Then strengthening the digital sphere and increasing confidence and digital sovereignty. In addition, adopting data based governance which uses Big Data and makes use of development of Artificial Intelligence. In addition intelligent transport systems and digital financial services.

Next developing digital skills so that we can respond to the needs of our population currently. In addition, ensuring a digital culture and developing an environment which is favorable to business. We are also looking to implement a global international cooperation strategy on cyberspace.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Tunisia has always sought to bolster its links with ITU and its Member States. In this regard we have worked in favor of the ITU and its activities. And have hosted a number of the ITU's global events because we are convinced of the importance of contributing to international efforts.

And that in order to achieve development goals, in particular when it comes to the digital sphere. Today, we would like to present our candidacy to the ITU Council as well as Mr. Bilel Jamoussi who is a candidate for the position of the director of Telecommunication Bureau. We thank those who contributed to organizing this meeting. May it be successful. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Tunisia. I invite now Papua New Guinea, Mr. Timothy Masiu. Your Excellency.

>> Microphone for the distinguished speaker.

>> CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt you, Your Excellency. You need to push the button. Thank you.

>> PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Thank you very much, Chair. Chairman, Secretary‑General of ITU, distinguished ITU executives and directors, Ministers and officials of the host country Romania, heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen, greetings from the people and Government of Papua New Guinea. As Minister for ICT and head of delegation of the Papua New Guinea team I wish to convey our appreciation to the Government of Romania for hosting the ITU PP‑22 and for the wonderful hospitality given to us so far.

I'd also thank ITU for the continued support for extending the global communication and connecting the world for a better and safer future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in a short space of time Papua New Guinea has gained needed traction in its digital transformation journey. This is reflected through the following three key milestone policy documents. And they are the Papua New Guinea digital transformation policy of 2020, the Digital Government Act of 2022 and the Digital Government 2023 to 2027. Parallel to this we are realigning our universal access policy, universal access Strategic Plan, national broadband plan and consequently would be making amendments to National ICT Act of 2009.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Papua New Guinea's efforts are now shifting to the delivery of digitizing and digitalization. Under the Digital Government Act of 2022, we are enforcing a cloud first policy. Data governance and using a whole of Government delivery approach. While we are focused on delivering fast, clear and simple digital services to our Government, business and people, investment in digital infrastructures including Internet Governance, digital skills and cybersecurity remains a challenge for us.

In our journey, the biggest lesson we are learning is that digital transformation is not all about technology, but rather about transforming the mindset of Government, business and our people. It is about rethinking our approach in delivering change.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is our journey so far. And we encourage that moving forward the ITU plays a greater role in supporting smaller Member States in their respective journeys. In this vain, I reaffirm Papua New Guinea's position that we will support all candidates and any proposal that reflect this focus.

Papua New Guinea is an emerging nation in the Pacific region and we are committed to the ITU. To reflect our commitment, we are doubling our unit contribution from a quarter unit to half a unit. We are also pulling for the establishment of a sub‑Regional Office in the Pacific.

Ladies and Gentlemen, finally, I sincerely thank the current ITU Secretary‑General, Deputy Secretary‑General's Council members and directors for your immense contribution during your term. We now look forward to working closely with the newly elected officials, and we offer our congratulations in advance.

Papua New Guinea has had to rethink its approach for digital transformation. Our newly elected officers will relook at ITU's approach for global cooperation as well. Before I finish this, the famous Albert Einstein once said we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. Thank you for your time and wish you all the best in the remaining days and weeks as you continue this ITU PP‑22. And may God bless you all. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Your Excellency. Thank you for the input for the Union regarding your contribution. The next country I'm inviting is United Kingdom, represented by His Excellency, Mr. Damian Collins, parliamentary under‑Secretary of State head of department for digital culture, media and support. The floor is yours.

>> UNITED KINGDOM: Thank you. Honorable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important honor for me to speak on behalf of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom believes that the ITU plays a critically important role in telecommunications and ICTs. We are committed to working with our friends and colleagues here to ensure that all parts of the world are able to harness the full potential of these technologies. This is a very important commitment for me. When we talk about connecting the world, we recognize that a third of the world is not on the Internet. That figure doesn't give the full picture.

96% of people who are unconnected, not connected live in the Developing World. 10% of Europeans who are not. We cannot connect the world where these disparities exist. And that's why the ITU's work in this area is so very important.

In the UK, we are proud to support capacity building through our digital access program, supported by the hundred million U.S. dollars of UK funding which has directly reached 7.8 million people. We are working with over a hundred countries in cyber capacity building and space agencies. International policy program works with Developing Countries using technology to deliver sustainable development with 170 million U.S. dollars of UK funding.

Telecommunications and ICTs have expanded and developed at a tremendous pace over recent years. The regulatory and standardization landscape has become increasingly broad and complex. It is more important than ever for the ITU to forge a strategic role in this 21st Century landscape. Fully understanding the roles of other organizations working in the field of ICTs and support Member States to navigate this new landscape. The ITU said it best, build the spirit of common purpose on a set of common opportunities and common challenges.

For example, we welcome the ITU's response to the COVID pandemic. Setting up the global networks resiliency platform and allowing ICT regulators and other stakeholders to share information and best practice. Such initiatives demonstrate the value of the ITU and the unique partnerships it can build. We also commend the ITU's work to support the recovery of telecoms infrastructure in Ukraine at this critical time. The UK remains steadfast in our support for Ukraine.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Malcolm Johnson as he steps down from his role. In the UK we are very proud of the strong partnership he has built. The UK is standing for election to the ITU Council of this conference. We strongly support the ITU's mission to connect the unconnected. We believe in building consensus. And we want to work with others to help ensure the ITU continues to deliver effectively for the benefit of all its members. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, UK. I invite now the representative of Slovenia, Her Excellency Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh, Minister at Government Office for Digital Transformation. Your Excellency.

>> SLOVENIA: It is my great honor and privilege to address you at this important ITU event. Today telecommunications are shaping the quality of our lives. As a Minister, I'm happy to say that we are fostering connectivity in Slovenia. We advocate for safe inclusive access for Internet for all. We are giving particular attention to data, to open data that ensures accessibility, transparency, and trust in Government as well as economic benefits for businesses, by creating user services, products and business opportunities.

Slovenia is very successful in the field of public sector open data. And it is the first in the European Union. Digital transformation is successful only when all members of the society are equally included and when no one is left behind at the global level.

My country's particularly concerned about the gender, rural, urban and age digital divide. Women although representing half of the world's population are significantly underrepresented in almost all areas of ICT education, employment, and entrepreneurship and leadership. Empowering women with digital skills enables them to fully and meaningfully participate in democracy, education and business in the digital society. As women in technology myself, I'm particularly interested in mentorship and peer to peer encouragement. And I would like to applaud to the ITU's initiatives in this regard, including network of women.

Digital empowered generation equality was at the center of the ITU regional for Europe on meaningful connectivity that Slovenia cohosted last year. I strongly welcome the World Summit on Information Society Forum 2022 a special track on ICTs and older persons. We believe in a reasonable Human Rights Based Approach to development, deployment and use of digital technologies. By applying legal and ethical frameworks we must make sure that digital technologies can further consolidate legitimate Democratic processes not infringed on. Multi‑stakeholder international efforts are needed to raise awareness and empower everyone, especially children about online risks and prevent and counter cyber bullying and hate speech online.

Finally, I would like to tackle the twinning of green and digital transformation of our societies. I believe they go hand in hand.

Please let me share an excellent example from my hometown with you. A new data center constructed from the river sentiments will be built on the island in the middle of the river. The flow of the water can be used for the cooling of the data center and the wasted heat energy will heat residential buildings in the surroundings.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of membership in ITU this year we have come a long way to connect our citizens and develop a resilient and inclusive ICT ecosystem. We stand ready to share our knowledge and best practices to bridge the digital divide. I would like to reference one more to Mr. Traian Vuia, Minister Burduja yesterday. We work not only for our own glory but the glory of the humankind. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you. Now I'm inviting the Islamic Republic of Iran represented by His Excellency Mr. Issa Zarepour, Minister of Information and Communications Technology. Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Mr. Chairman, Honorable Ministers, Secretary‑General of ITU, and other elected officials, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to the people and Government of Romania for the kind hospitality for organizing this event in the beautiful city of Bucharest. We are confident that under your leadership this Plenipotentiary Conference will become an admirable success.

Mr. Chairman, for more than a decade the Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen ICT as a key driver for its economic growth.

At the Government level appropriate bodies were established to facilitate the development of ICT infrastructure. As a result, we are diligently implementing a mega project to provide optical fiber access for 20 million locations across the country to connect homes and offices. At the same time, mobile phone coverage has reached more than 100%. And we are providing connectivity to the unconnected in more than 90% of rural and remote areas.

The Government is also providing more opportunities for research and studies on ICT, including emerging technologies. Other ICT elected programs, include Child Online Protection, provision of services and content for Persons with Disabilities, and specific needs. As so the special programs are implemented to promote the participation of women on ICTs. Iran has also developed prevalent local ICT structures and platforms such as online stores, e‑banking, shared transportation and VODs. Additionally, Iran has applied ICT in health sector, especially during the COVID‑19 pandemics and in the development of a Smart Government services.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, in this fast changing world, we do believe that promoting the role of ITU has become indispensable. We have participated dynamically and positively in ITU activities and meetings. And have contributed to achieve consensus on many difficult and sensitive issues. We hope that you would enable us to continue this role by your words to Iran's spirit for re‑election to the ITU Council. I thank you for your attention. And wish you success for this conference.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Now it is my pleasure to invite to take the floor Uganda, represented by His Excellency, Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, Minister of ICT and national guidance.

>> UGANDA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Secretary‑General of ITU, Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and leaders of Delegations, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to participate in the Internet Telecommunication Union Plenipotentiary Conference 2022. I thank the Government and the people of Romania for the warm hospitality extended to all of us. On behalf of the Government of Uganda and the people of Uganda I bring warm greetings and congratulate the ITU family and its partners upon the realization of this very important forum which will set policies that will greatly influence the direction of the global digital transformation agenda for the next four years.

Distinguished Delegates, for us to achieve sustainable digital transformation, we must be alert to not just the economic issues, such as how we fund it, or the social aspects, that are associated with ensuring that everyone enjoys the benefits but also the environmental impact and the societal challenges.

As we all continue to strive towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we are cognizant of our joint commitment to the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT development that focuses on technological advances contributing to our acceleration of achievement of SDGs by 2030. This is to be done ensuring that technology serves humanity and the planet.

The Government of Uganda has designated ICTs as one of the four priority areas. As such a national digital transformation program has been established under the national development plan with a focus on the development of a conducive policy and regulatory environment enhancing ICT infrastructure and connectivity, digital services, ICT scaling, and innovation.

Complimentary developments by Government and private sector have enabled the realization of fiber connectivity, geographic borders within the five neighboring countries and traversing all the administrative regions of the country. Mobile broadband coverage has grown from 79% in 2018 to 87 in 2022.

The result and uptick of broadband has sparred transformation with other key sectors within Uganda's economy, such as financial services, trade, education, and citizen participation.

Interventions that have been made have facilitated the establishment of ICT school laboratories in around 1300 public schools across the country with Internet connectivity being extended to this and ICT school clubs have been established. This includes provision to assistive technology to schools with children with special needs. A program on best skills is also being implemented to foster utilization of ICTs by the entire populous.

This includes specific programs for Persons with Disabilities and women as well as youth, especially those in the informal sector and those who have dropped out of school. The Government adopted the inclusivity economy scope to track its progress against the set digital transformation priority while identifying constraints to digital inclusion. Since the threat of ICT e‑waste Uganda has adopted a new waste policy and established an e‑waste management center for collection and safe disposal of ICT generated e‑waste.

Distinguished Delegates for us to realize sustainable transformation we must address ourselves to the issue of building trust and confidence in ICTs. And this calls for greater collaboration and partnerships to address both the technological and human factors associated with this.

As I conclude it gives me great pleasure to reiterate Uganda's request for re‑election to ITU Council for the 2022‑26 to representing Region D. we bring a rich experience in ICT policy development, culture of collaboration and consensus building, regional policy and market perspectives and broad based inclusive and participatory policy design efforts. Thank you very much. And I say this from God and my country, may God bless you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The next country is Mauritius. So I'm inviting His Excellency, Darsanand Balgobin, Minister of Information, Technology, Communication and Innovation to take the floor.

>> MAURITIUS: Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I thank the Government of Romania for its warm welcome and generous hospitality. I assure you Chair, of the full support of the Mauritius Delegation. Mr. Chairman, Mauritius is a Small Island Developing State in the Indian Ocean. People have heard of the tourist destination. But yet if you ask them to place it on the map they may feel challenged. As many small islands it suffers from the tyranny distance and as always been compelled to make significant efforts to remain connected to the world. The digitalization journey of the small island has been pursued despite constraints and has required sacrifice.

Allow me to share some of the steps taken with the ITU family. Mauritius has completed the deployment of fiber to the home. And broadband Internet penetration currently stands at 144%. Mobile penetration is at 151%. Internet connectivity stands at 99%. This will further increase with coming in to operation of full submarine cable of mid 2023. Last year Mauritius started deployment of 5G service.

To authenticate Government online transactions and e‑payments and info highway data sharing platform for sharing citizen's information. It is digitally safe for citizens and the sign certification authority which allows the issue of digital certificates. We are already embarked on the e‑Health and the high speed connectivity in several schools' projects. In primary schools, we are already providing robotics and coding courses. Mauritius is engaged in space technology and launched our first nano satellite last year. We are nearing the completion of AI and machine learning digital humanoid. We adopted last year the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021.

Emerging framework aligned with the Budapest Convention on cybercrime. The emerging Technology's Council is allowing us to harness more effective and efficiently new and emerging technologies.

Excellencies, Mauritius has a tradition of public/private partnership to harness the latest technology, create the operational framework for this. I share the steps of Mauritius' digital journey. If a Small Island Developing State can make progress in a short span, then surely together we can help bridge the digital gap that's giving rise to two worlds. The Mauritius candidature for the Council membership stands in this place. We stand ready for achievement towards this goal. I thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much. I'm inviting now Brazil to take the floor, represented by Mr. Carlos Manuel Baigorri, President of the National Telecommunication Agency.

>> BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. ITU elected officials, Honorable Ministers, and Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honor to address this Honorable public attending to the ITU PP‑22, 2022 conference. I wish to thank and congratulate the Government of Romania for hosting this important conference giving us the warmest welcome in this city of Bucharest.

United to build on better digital future I would like to share some of the steps Brazil is taking. The ICT sector has a unique role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 agenda. To foster this section within our nation vocation, we have managed to ‑‑ we have managed to offer our players a wide range of bands under different conditions. With this there is no artificial spectrum scarcity, believing that deployment of 5G technology spectrum is available. It took place last year and was one of the largest options in the world. The option even broad new entrance to our market.

Once Brazil concluded a diagnosis of telecommunications infrastructure gaps, the most significant contributions are being paid through goals of stand‑alone 5G deployments, public school connectivity and others. With this I see Brazil as a leading country in developing 5G reality. But a digital future is not an isolated one.

Many of the outcomes I have reported we have obtained along with ITU's work in the three sectors. That's why Brazil is eager to share our experience and help ITU set the direction for global digital transformation.

Should go beyond our constant participation in Study Groups, meetings and conferences, we present the Brazilian representative as a candidate for radio regulation board. And we also expect to participate again in the ITU Council.

At this conference, we want to reinforce Brazil's commitment to ITU. Respecting the Union's mandate, technical core, equal rights of all Member States and their reaching contributions of sector members. We believe that advances could be achieved in critical contemporary topics such as cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence and cyber connectivity. To support the Union's needs, I am proud to announce that Brazil is increasing the number of contributory units from 3 to 11. Reaching a higher class ‑‑ reaching a higher class of contributions. That's an effort to strengthen ITU by allowing new projects to face our current challenges.

Finally, Brazil expresses our thanks for the tireless efforts made by Secretary‑General Houlin Zhao, the directors of the three sectors. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

>> CHAIR: Please Secretary‑General.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is unusual because normally we have to respect the speaking order. But after I heard this wonderful news from Brazil from 3 to 11, it is really, really good. So I would like to just add my appreciation. To be honest with you, I have good news from Brazil. I don't know whether they announced the increase or they were cut by half. This wonderful moment, let me appreciate Brazil's administration to help us by increasing their contribution unit. And also my present appreciation to Carlos and Max for their excellent efforts to help us to get this good news here. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Secretary‑General. Indeed it is unusual to take the floor, but for such good news I'm going to give you the floor each time. I promise you. Thank you, Brazil, for the good news. More to come hopefully.

I'm inviting now the representative of Burundi, Her Excellency, Minister of Communication and Technology and Media. Her Excellency, please you have the floor.

>> BURUNDI: Thank you very much. Chairman, of the conference, Secretary‑General of the International Telecommunication Union, Ladies and Gentlemen, heads and members of the different Delegations here present, distinguished participants, good afternoon. On behalf of the Government of Burundi and in my personal capacity I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the host country and to the International Telecommunication Union for the organization of this Plenipotentiary. The Republic of Burundi on the basis is of our national policy for the development of ICTs and the recent sectorial policy on ICTs to make ICTs an instrument for the development of our socioeconomic sectors in the long term, particularly through the development of infrastructure, broadband infrastructure, allowing us to benefit the largest possible number of our citizens offering them the advantages and opportunities of ICTs.

The mass rollout of fiber optics across all of the Provinces of our country has allowed us to significantly bring down the cost. However, more effort is required to head, particularly for digital access and inclusion which is limited in rural areas despite the fact that 70% of the population is concentrated in those areas. Access to ICTs for women, and for Persons with Disabilities, access to digital financial services that are secure, and so on.

Distinguished participants, Burundi has already done much in favor of the development of the ICT sector. Particularly, the creation of community telecenters across the country. Connecting schools, Universities, hospitals, the development of applications to improve the communication networks of our institutions, and other projects that are under way including the establishment of the national public service digitalization plan and the project to support the Digital Economy.

Distinguished participants, I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to ITU and to its management for their support in the establishment and setting up of our broadband strategy, for the support of establishment of a policy to manage e‑waste and electronic waste. The establishment of CERT RT and tech as an engine for economic opportunities for women which is currently underway.

We reiterate our commitment to cooperate with the General Secretariat of the ITU in the achievement of other initiatives under the Partner2Connect digital alliance. I could not conclude without thanking the Secretary‑General of the Union as well as the members of the management team of ITU for the work achieved over these last four years and for the organization of this Plenipotentiary which I hope will be crowned with success. May God bless you all. Thank you.

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. I invite now the representative of Cambodia, His Excellency, Mr. Puthyvuth Sok, Secretary of State in the Minister of Post and Telecommunications.

>> CAMBODIA: Excellency, Chair, Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. On behalf of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications of Cambodia I would like to thank ITU and the Government of Romania for the warm hospitality in the ancient and beautiful city of Bucharest.

As the world leaders gathering in the UN General Assembly we can see that many nations are calling for peace and stability and multilateralism. All of us here as ITU Member States also have a role to help contribute to these common goals. We need to continue the course to connect the unconnected, and to build a digital society that are for all people, not just for a few,

especially for future generations.

Digital transformation and the industrial revolution are powerful tools that can help solve or exacerbate our current global challenges. The pandemic and climate change and geopolitics are affecting our environment today. In the coming years, the coordination and directions of international organizations like ITU will be put to the test. Where they will get stuck in this agreement or uphold this purpose, and gain member's trust to foster a better future, I hope it is the latter.

Cambodia has established the Digital Economy and Society Council chaired by our Prime Minister Sen. Digital Economy and business Committee, and digital security Committee.

This is an important milestone for Cambodia's digital transformation journey as it set a clear direction for the whole of Government to move forward and to realize our visions to make Cambodia a high income country for 2050.

Taking this opportunity I am delighted to inform that the Royal Government of Cambodia is very excited to collaborate with ITU Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and happy to be one of the pilot countries to help contribute to the P2C pledges. ITU has supported our digital transformation objectives by identifying gaps in implementation strategy, which we would like to further explore together in the upcoming Round Table discussion in November in Cambodia.

I would like to thank all the outgoing ITU management team, especially His Excellency, Secretary‑General Houlin Zhao, and Deputy Secretary‑General Malcolm Johnson for your service and leadership to the ITU over these years. Under your leadership we have seen a significant decrease in the digital divide and more equitable development among Developed and Developing Countries. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors. Welcome to the new ITU leadership. Thank you very much

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much for your statement. The next country invited to take the floor is the Russian Federation, represented by Her Excellency Ms. Bella Cherkesova, Deputy Minister of Digital Development Communications and Mass Media.

>> RUSSIAN FEDERATION: Thank you, Chair. Secretary‑General of the ITU, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to note the history of this organization which has joined us all together today. The ITU is one of the oldest specialized agencies of the UN system. And at the time it was created the only means of telecommunications was the telegraph. Since then, of course, we have only made progress forward. But all of these innovations which have allowed us to achieve such a high level of ICT development today, required new international agreements from all of us on issues that had never been on the agenda before. Only thanks to those agreements in understanding of unity that we have been able to reach this new digital world.

And the ITU should remain an agency whose main goal is to unite people throughout the world. Because of a number of countries we are noting that the work of the Union has become politicalized. There has been a violation of the major documents of the Union and representatives of the Russian Federation were ‑‑ those who were nominated by Russia and relevant telecommunication organizations were not allowed to be put forward to be Chairs or Vice‑Chairs.

The representation of a whole region was therefore excluded from the ITU's work. We have noted that there is similar proposals from a number of people to exclude Russia from taking part in Chairmanship of a number of ITU bodies. Just because of their nationality and this violates the unity of our professional organization.

The effective work of the Union depends on just geographic representation which has not held a place for discrimination. Russia respects the foundational documents of the ITU and works constructively in the interest of maintaining a nondiscriminatory unity.

We would advocate for equal dialogue in the interest of all Member States placing particular focus on the needs of Developing Countries and the ITU as a whole. This is a very important four‑year period that's upcoming which requires that we develop approaches to the digital sphere for the whole of humanity. However, all political debates must remain outside of the Union. Digitalization is one of our national priorities for Russia. And we focus in particular on developing staff skills. Thanks to state support we have more than a hundred courses available in different spheres. We work actively on ensuring universal access to the Internet. The cost of broadband in our country is one of the world's lowest.

And in conclusion, I would like to note that as you know, Russia has provided a candidate for the post of the Secretary‑General, Rashid Ismailov as well as Nikolay Varlamov, a member of the RRB. And you know these people very well. You know their many years of experience and the fact that they have worked in the ITU in the interest of all its members. And the election of these important posts must be carried out in line with the foundational documents of the ITU and in close line with the mandate of the Union. We would like to ask you to support our candidates in the upcoming elections. And also like to thank the ITU and Romania for having organized the Plenipotentiary Conference. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Russian Federation. I'm inviting the next country which is Mongolia, represented by Her Excellency, Ms. Bolor‑Erdene Battsengel, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Communications.

>> MONGOLIA: Thank you. Honorable Chairman, Secretary‑General of ITU, Excellencies, and Delegations, I'm very honored to visit this beautiful city of Bucharest, Romania to attend the 21st ITU conference under the theme Connect and Unite. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Secretary‑General, Mr. Houlin Zhao and the ITU officials for their support and leadership in organizing this amazing event after two, three years of the pandemic.

On behalf of the Mongolian Government I'm grateful for the Government of Romania and the National Authority for management and regulations and communications for hosting this conference. I will use this opportunity to update you on Mongolia's latest digital development. The Government of Mongolia has announced the ICT sector as one of the leading sectors and aims to build a digital nation. In this context, several new legal instruments such as law and personal data protection, public information, e‑signature and cybersecurity have been approved by the Parliament last year and effective this year.

We have also made necessary structural changes within the Parliament as well as the Government. For example, the Standing Committee on Innovation and Digital Policy was established within the Parliament in 2020 to create a friendly legal environment for digital development in Mongolia. In addition to that, I'm very happy to inform you that the Mongolian Government has established the Ministry of Digital Development and Communications from January this year. In terms of achievement of digital governance we introduced the e‑Mongolian platform. It includes over 2,000 Government services.

And we provide services to 90% of our adult population. And the system has delivered more than 16 million services to all Mongolians living outside of cities. And we ensure inclusion. Regarding the policy and midterm policy document till 2027 called Digital Nation Strategy was approved by the Government of Mongolia.

In the background of all of this, we are working toward the goal of becoming a tech hub, the next tech hub in Asia. We are working to create a legal framework for granting e‑residency for foreign residents, establishing a company registered in Mongolia and creating a legal framework to creating residency for foreign citizens and offer Government tax regulations for them.

With these few remarks I would like to pledge Mongolia's readiness to and to contribute to the ITU Connect 2030 Agenda as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We must not leave anyone behind from digital development.

In the world we have a lot of inequalities. We have educational inequalities. We have digital. We have gender inequalities and income inequalities. And if we had digital inequalities I don't think that we will be able to fill the gap of inequality in the future. I would like to urge the countries to ensure digital inclusion in your own country as well as other countries.

Thank you very much. And good luck to you all.

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mongolia. I think it is good what you said, Secretary‑General. I have the pleasure to invite now Argentina, represented by Her Excellency, Secretary of Public Innovation.

>> ARGENTINA: Good afternoon, Your Excellencies, Ministers, colleagues. We would like to thank the whole team behind PP‑22 for making this event possible and particularly Romania for their excellent hospitality. Today we would like to reiterate the participation of our country to ITU. We have been a member since 1889. Our professional work in the Council in different groups, holding different Vice‑Chairs of ITU‑D and CITEL has allowed us to bring together positions of international consensus, ensuring a balanced representation of the needs and realities of the Latin American region. It is a time to deepen our commitment, to shore up our presence regionally at the ITU.

Here in fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda goals Argentina has the huge challenge of guaranteeing and incentivizing and guaranteeing access to ICTs in rural areas and in schools and in hospitals. For this reason on the basis of our connect program we are working to design and build two geostationary telecommunications sites. These are next generation satellites which will extend coverage from our asset 1 and 2 current satellites.

We are therefore substantially increasing the capacity and extension of our fiber optics network. We are providing infrastructure for our centralized database. And we are revitalizing free accessible digital television services. We are increasing the state financing for Provinces and municipalities in order to guarantee access to broadband across the national territory. We are beginning to build alliances in order to move towards global connectivity that we in Argentina see as a right and priority. This is why we are leading groups in the Partner2Connect initiative. We are seeking to empower women to ensure full gender equality and access to ICTs.

The gender divide should be bridged via public/private partnerships together with academia and the science and technology communities. We must build representative equal policies. Women are still underrepresented in the industry. We welcome the creation of the women's network. And we trust our friends and colleagues will be included in all areas of ITU.

Local authorities in Argentina are using open standards. We are seeking to guarantee across our national territory the sustainability of our work. And we hope that we can extend this work out further to other countries in the Latin American regions to allow us to become a digital hub. As a Developing Country it is very important to have the support of the R sector in ITU to promote equal access to space services. We will continue to strengthen our local satellite industry.

The value of cooperation is the true value of ITU. And this is how we build commitments in connectivity governance and global digital inclusion. We can continue to work together. All countries facing the greatest inequality and obstacles can benefit from the Digital Economy. We hope we will count on the support of all countries for or candidacy to the Council.

Finally, in 1992 we reiterate our reservation with regard to e‑malvinus. And we reiterate our sovereignty over that as part of our National Authority, legally occupied by the United Kingdom. They are subject to a dispute before the United Nations. Thank you.

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you. And because you mentioned women in your speech, allow me to salute the countries for managing ‑‑ who managed to have head of Delegations as women because we expressed our intention to have gender balance during this PP. So congratulations to all those countries.

I'm inviting now Chile to take the floor by His Excellency, Claudio Araya, Undersecretary of Communications.

>> CHILE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will speak in Spanish. Secretary‑General, Deputy Secretary‑General, Delegates, representatives of the Member States of ITU, before beginning I would like to thank the Government of Romania for the excellent welcome that they have offered for this Plenipotentiary Conference. We would also like to congratulate ITU for the excellent organization and for the theme Connect to Unite which is the slogan that we take up from our Telecommunications Authority.

I'd like to say that in the north of Chile there are places that have become ‑‑ have become an ideal place for spatial observation. We are seeing the proliferation of satellite constellations. We should reflect on to how we can make compatible accessibility and compatibility for all persons with scientific progress. They do not need to be opposed. I believe furthermore that today humanity is facing certain unprecedented challenges.

Social tensions generated by the pandemic and inequality as well as the concentration of the media in a few hands are threatening our democracies. The proliferation of news whether true or not together with algorithms used by social network platforms in order to target certain content are deepening these tensions in our societies. I believe it is necessary to put in place the means to protect our democracies.

Those who do not join the Digital Economy are at a huge disadvantage compared to those who do. And to avoid further inequality we must ensure effective connectivity for all everywhere at all times. For years we have pursued public policies that allow today more than 60% of households have a fixed Internet connection.

60% of those connections are using fiber optics. According to the speed test we are one of the countries with the highest download rate in the world. But this measure does not take in to account that a third of households that do not have fixed connection either because there is no coverage or because they cannot contribute to the service. We have made progress in digital. We have done our work. Sometimes we have to help them pay their bills. And we have to lay down the tools to make technology a means to improve living standards. Our challenge does not end at connectivity. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Chile. I am inviting now the representative of Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency, Mr. Latsamy Keomany, representative of Lao's People's Democratic Republic. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

>> LAO: Thank you, Excellency, Chairman. Excellencies, at the outset I would like to thank the host, Romania, for the excellent arrangement. The Lao PDR is of the view that this PP‑22 is very timely with the theme Connect and Unite. As we are living in an unprecedented world of the COVID‑19 pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical tension. Therefore, the ITU mandate and role can contribute immensely to these solutions.

Mr. Chairman, despite the challenges posed by being a Least Developed Country coupled with landlocked and mountainous landscapes, up to date the Lao PDR is progressing well in implementing UN SDG No. 9, including to manage while both digital infrastructure and human resources development in digital.

Mr. Chairman, on the way forward, I would like to share the Lao PDR's priorities as follows: one, we ask for further support and cooperation to implement our Digital Economy development plan 2021‑2025. Namely, digital infrastructure to meet the targets of 3G coverage of 100%; 4G, 90% and 5G, 50% by 2025. And to enable our MSMEs to be able to do e‑business, to leverage their competitiveness and productivity.

Two, Lao PDR is embarking on turning the country from a landlocked to a land linked. We look forward to working closely with ITU and other donors bilaterally and multilaterally to have ICT solutions to facilitate trade, investment, logistics and people to people connectivity.

Three, is a party to the information and technology agreement and information technology expansion agreement. The Lao PDR would like to invite both public and private sectors of all ITU Member States and multi‑national companies to visit and explore the opportunities to jointly incorporate and invest in technology and innovation sectors in Lao.

And finally is the Lao PDR is going to graduate from a Least Developed Country category by 2026. Therefore, I make a plea to ITU and both bilateral and multilateral donors to lend their support in preparing a smooth and sustainable graduation including the synergy of the implementation of LDCs 5, 2022‑2031. I thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Lao. Now I am inviting France, represented by His Excellency, Mr. Eric Lebedel‑Delumeau. The floor is yours.

>> FRANCE: Chairman, Secretary‑General, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers and Ambassadors, dear Delegates and high level representatives, first of all, I would like to extend my wholehearted thanks to Romania, the host country and to ITU for the perfect organization of this conference.

Since the last Plenipotentiary Conference in 2018, the telecommunications and digital technology landscape has undergone profound transformations. We have witnessed technological break‑throughs and extraordinary developments in artificial intelligence and quantum computing and the widespread use of 5G. The COVID‑19 pandemic has led to an acceleration of connectivity efforts nevertheless and has clearly shed light on the digital divide.

The two strategic targets of ITU for the new cycle have never been more relevant. Yet we have less than eight years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030.

Too much of humanity is still deprived of access to essential services. By its participation in the ITU France and its sector members are working to develop global broadband connectivity which is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Together we must create the conditions for a favorable environment, conducive to investment in connectivity infrastructure and the different components. Satellite, land and undersea with a specific focus on promoting access to all to digital and radiocommunications technologies.

France has also made the development of sustainable digital technology one of its priorities through green transition. The French Government has drawn up an ambitious national digital technology and environment roadmap, the aim of which is to achieve convergence of digital and ecological transitions through the mobilization of all stakeholders.

France which is highly involved in these issues at ITU, particularly in the ITU‑T Study Group 5 and as it Chairs, France considers this organization to be a particularly appropriate platform to lead this dual transition.

We welcome the considerable efforts of ITU to promote inclusive participation, particularly of women Delegates to greatly reduce the environmental footprint of our work.

We would like to see these efforts continue to guide our collective action throughout the upcoming cycle. France, a founding member of the ITU and active participant in the life and work of the organization is asking for your support to pursue its actions in the Council and in the Radio Regulations board, to promote universal connectivity and a sustainable digital transformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, lastly, I spare a special thought for Ukraine which is undergoing daily cyber attacks. And for their brave people who no longer have normal access to telecommunications networks. On behalf of France I would like to express our full solidarity. Thank you.

(Applause.)

>> CHAIR: Thank you, France. It is my pleasure to invite the representative of Mexico, His Excellency, Mr. Benito Jimenez Sauma, Secretary of the Embassy of Mexico here in Romania.

>> MEXICO: Thank you. Delegates of the Member States, authorities of the ITU, observer organizations, industry members, academia members, distinguished participants, it is a pleasure to greet you. And I start with deep filled thanks to the people of Romania and their show of affection here at the Plenipotentiary Conference. I stand convinced that the environment of friendship and closeness that you have organized the event with will significantly contribute to the achievement of our objectives here.

Today we find ourselves deeply immersed in a process of technological disruption through the mass use of new technologies such as 5G, the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence just to mention a few. This new environment despite all of its facets does and its advantages does present significant challenges to the sector. The main challenge to the digital ecosystem is achieving the full democratization of access to new technological tools, including essential access to ‑‑ for those sectors that are most disadvantaged and marginalized in Developing Countries.

I am pleased to say that Mexico has taken decisive steps to try to overcome the challenges set down by the new digital environment. The Government of Mexico is working to bring down barriers and obstacles to the rollout of maintenance and radio infrastructure. We have established Working Groups with the three Government bodies, industry, academia and Civil Society in order to counter cybersecurity threats.

Furthermore, we have developed the smart villages social welfare system that we hope will be inspired from the smart villages project from ITU to bring connectivity to the rural areas to support the activities of the population.

67 smart villages are currently operated with more than 100,000 beneficiaries. Our social coverage program has identified over 7,000 localities which require telecommunications systems with increased accessibility, availability and affordability. Through the public connectivity program we have identified 24,800 public sites to offer free broadband connectivity enabling access to social programs and projects undertaken by the Government of Mexico.

Furthermore, the ‑‑ we are seeking to bring about telecommunications and Internet for all. We are ‑‑ we have wireless connectivity available in many public places. We currently have more than 44,000 points with free Internet connectivity throughout the country.

The Government is also promoting the rollout and development of a shared network. The latest generation wholesale network by 2028 should have coverage for the ‑‑ for 92.2% of our population. I'm pleased to add that the projects and efforts for connectivity undertaken in recent years have borne fruit.

According to the latest survey on the availability and use of ICTs in households from 2021 in Mexico we counted 88.6 million Internet users, a figure which compares favorably with the 70.3 million users observed in 2017. We will continue to work with all stakeholders in the ecosystem to ensure that access to new technologies is a reality for all of our population, without losing sight of the priorities of the Government of our President to bridge the digital divide and connect the unconnected.

Here from Mexico, it is extremely important to participate as a Member State of the ITU as we recognize the ITU as an organization which facilitates public policy and strategy to benefit the global population. We hope we can count on your valuable support to be a member of the Council. And Mexico will continue to work to strengthen our Union and to better coordinate the positions and visions of all members. We will work to promote the establishment of policies and strategies which respond to the development of ICTs in the digital area

as well as to contribute to making sure that ITU undertakes action for the universal development of telecommunications.

We would be grateful for your consideration of Mr. Javier Juarez Mojica, a candidate of Mexico to the Radio Regulations board of the ITU who has a significant career and experience and knowledge in the telecommunications sector. We assure you if elected he will work to ensure that decisions have technical and elements of justice and impartiality and equality will be taken in account in decisions involving the spectrum management. Allow me to express that it is our hope that the work and deliberations of this Plenipotentiary Conference bear great fruit and success. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mexico. The delicious lunch is offered by UK and Bulgaria and it gives us a lot of energy. We were fast. We almost finished our work for today. Thank you again UK, Bulgaria for your courtesy.

Speaking about the food we encourage tourism as well. I just found out that today's the International Day of Tourism. And with this occasion I'm inviting you to take maybe one or two days to visit Romania. There are plenty of places to see and nice things to do.

As the list of countries who delivered policy statements for today is closed, I invite you after this to have the coffee break offered by Nigeria. Actually it is not a coffee break. It is going to be the end of the meeting after this ‑‑ after we are closing the Plenary. We have no other points on our agenda. And keep in mind we have a reception today from 5:30, the reception offered by Korea in Unity Hall. From 6:30 the reception by USA. From 8 p.m. the reception offered by Saudi Arabia. And also from 8 p.m. the reception offered in Unity Hall, the reception of Saudi Arabia and from 8 p.m. the reception offered by India. I'm inviting any country and I see some of them, the United States of America are requesting the floor.

>> UNITED STATES: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the chance to just say thank you to all of the Delegations for the fast work this afternoon. We hope this will give you a good opportunity to come to the Brancusi hall at 6:30 for our reception. This is the same location where the Bulgarian coffee break or lunch was today and where the Portugal coffee break was yesterday.

So it is the Brancusi hall at 6:30. We look very much forward to seeing you there.

>> CHAIR: Thank you. The floor is open to invite Delegates to the receptions. There is a request from the state of Palestine. You have the floor.

Please give the floor, if possible, to the state of Palestine. I think we have small technical issues. I'm asking again to give the floor to the state of Palestine.

>> CHAIR: Okay. Meanwhile I will give the floor to Kenya. And after that I'm going to come back to the state of Palestine.

>> KENYA: Thank you, Chair. I would like to invite Delegates to a lunch tomorrow. Kenya, at 12:30. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Kenya. I'm giving the floor now to Saudi Arabia.

>> SAUDI ARABIA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, everyone. The Saudi Arabia Government welcomes you to tonight's reception at 8 p.m. at the entrance. We welcome, everyone. And we will see you there. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Saudi Arabia. I see a request for the floor from Korean Republic. Please you have the floor.

>> REPUBLIC OF KOREA: Thank you. The Republic of Korea has the pleasure to invite you all to the cocktail reception at 5:30 before the reception of the United States. I hope that you can also enjoy our cocktail party before having many other receptions tonight. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much for your invitation, Republic of Korea. Maybe we can provide a microphone to the state of Palestine in case that mic is not working so they can take the floor.

>> PALESTINE: Chair.

>> CHAIR: Please, state of Palestine, you have the floor.

>> PALESTINE: Thank you, Chair. Our Minister spoke during the morning session. That's what I wanted to say. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, state of Palestine. And with this kind invitation from all the states that are organizing coffee breaks and receptions I declare this meeting adjourned. Thank you very much. It was a very good day. Let's enjoy the receptions offered by our countries. Thank you.

(Session concluded at 1604 EEST)

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