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>> CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Could you kindly be seated so that we can start our Plenary meeting for today.

I hope you're all rested and ready to commence today's work.

Before seeking your approval for today's agenda, which is Document 15 and was published I want to thank the Republic of Korea United States, Saudi Arabia, and India for hosting beautiful cocktails and evening receptions yesterday, thank you very much for this, also Nigeria for the coffee break.

I would like to also add today is a special day for the United Nations family, the International Day for Universal Access to Information and I think we all agree that ICT plays a strong role in providing people access to information and to enforce the development of democracy and equality. Let's keep in mind this also for the next three weeks while we're here and all year, of course.

With this being said, I'm seeking for your approval for the agenda of today's meetings, Document 15, it was published already.

As there are no comments, we consider the agenda approved.

We proceed with the second point on our agenda, general policy statements. It is my pleasure to invite the first country for a policy statement today. We're just ‑‑ Switzerland represented by His Excellency Mr. Bernard Maissenn, State Secretary, Federal Office of Communications OFCOM.

Your Excellencies, you have the floor.

>> SWITZERLAND: Chair, Ministers, Secretary‑General, Deputy Secretary‑General, Directors of the Bureau, distinguished colleagues, delegates, good morning. On behalf of the Swiss delegation at the outset we would like to cordially thank the Romania government for the hospitality we're receiving here in Bucharest at this Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU.

The Swiss delegation will contribute actively to ensuring that this is an outstanding success. The next few weeks will allow us to join together as global community, creating a world in which everyone can benefit from the opportunities provided from ICTs. The other strategic orientation of ITU can only be ensured by management. I would like to thank the Secretary‑General as well as the Deputy Secretary‑General for their excellent management of the Union over the last eight years.

Chair, at the end of this year, we will be almost halfway through the period of the implementation of 20930 agenda. Progress has been made, but given the challenges we have seen currently, including the need to reduce inequalities between and within countries as well as global crisis linked to Climate Change and pollution we must accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. I wish to focus on SDG4, on education.

The pandemic has exacerbated gaps and existing disparities, the rates of students not going to school have increased amongst vulnerable groups such as girls or persons affected by conflict or who were displaced. Switzerland is proud to be supporting the Giga Initiative to connect all schools to the internet, and we have done that since it was established by ITU and UNICEF. Giga is a crucial initiative in order to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for each children not only by covering schools, ensuring they have access to the internet but ensuring they have more effective mechanisms. We will act in four way, contributing financially to the initiative, finding innovative financial mechanisms to increase its means and also promoting amongst the global community. We hope that many of you will join in this common cause. The closer our cooperation is the more of an impact on future generations.

Chair, the Swiss government calls on Member States to support its election to the ITU Council and recognize our collaboration in that way. We are very glad to have your support, Switzerland supports research and innovation and in that spirit it is convinced of the need to spread knowledge and good practices on ICTs so that they can serve to promote socioeconomic development globally. Switzerland will continue its commitment so that the ITU can remain a major collaboration platform for indispensable cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to invite to you a coffee break offered this afternoon by Switzerland.

Thank you for your kind attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Your Excellency. I invite the representative of Lithuania, Mr. Marius Skuodis , Minister of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Transport and Communications.

>> LITHUANIA: Dear Secretary‑General, dear President, dear colleagues, esteemed guest, first of all, I would like to thank you, and the entire ITU team for the every effort and leadership in fostering digital connectivity in the world.

Last year starkly reminded the global community of how critical it is for everyone to be part of the Digital World and it has just been emphasized by my colleague from Switzerland. Our vision on ensuring digital connectivity is based on synergy of all market players as well as synergy of technologies. The role of governments in my view is quite simple, that is to ensure an effective, legal, regulatory ecosystem.

Dear colleagues, as the Lithuania candidate is campaigning for the position of the Deputy Secretary‑General Tomas Lamanauskas, he also echoes this vision and strives to build broad impacts‑oriented partnership, to prove it works in practice, allow me to mention several examples, for the past 15 years Lithuania government invested in backbone infrastructure in remote areas where business has no interest. Meanwhile, business ensures last mile access. This international acclaimed collaboration model enabled us to successfully connect 99% of our territory. Moreover, it enabled the rollout of 5G technology which today already connects 80% of Lithuania population. We are also building partnerships with neighboring countries throughout the Baltic corridor, this corridor will bring the future closer by enabling automated and intelligent transport services across borders. Colleague, my team has probably met most of you these days and we hear your main concern, that is Cybersecurity. I'm delighted that the Lithuania private practice has extensive experience in offering onsite training opportunities and our key business representatives, they're here and you can contact them.

My final point, the integration of satellite and terrestrial systems is key to providing better quality and coverage of users. However, the one Ukraine has shown ‑‑ the war in Ukraine showed the importance of an alternative, if the communications is destroyed. Satellite communication, it is likely the only means to connect with the rest of the world in these circumstances.

I'm proud and happy that Lithuania came forward to be a partner with Ukraine with a partner to connect program and a report on the damages of the Ukraine telecommunication sector has been recently finalized and we must all stand ready to offer further contribution to repairing and reconstruction of the Ukraine telecommunication sector. I'm convinced that ITU Member States are ready to strengthen and have broader partnerships to bring digital future to everyone and everywhere. I'm sure that extensive knowledge will help us all in this journey.

Thank you very much and I'm looking forward to continuing our discussions at the Lithuania reception later today.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

It is the pleasure to invite a friend of ours, Chair of PP‑18 in Dubai, and a friend who supported us a lot in the preparation process, the representative of United Arab Emirates, Mr. Eng. Majed Sultan Mesmar, Director General ‑ TDRATDRA.

Your Excellency, friend, you have the floor.

>> UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: In the name of God, the merciful, Your Excellency, the Secretary‑General, Your Excellencies, greetings, God be upon you.

At the outset, I thank the Republic of Romania for hosting this Conference, as well as the great hospitality that we're shown.

Since the last Plenipotentiary Conference in 2018 held in Dubai the United Arab Emirates, the world has witnessed significant events at all level, the most prominent of which was the spread of COVID‑19 pandemic which on one hand highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the world's readiness to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and on the other hand, challenged the continuity of life in times of major crisis. Perhaps the most obvious conclusion that emerged from that difficult time is the ICT secretary was the most crucial in ensuring continuity of life at all levels. It is encouraging today to witness the ambition ITU strategy that combines two goals, universal connectivity and sustainable Digital Transformation. In this context, we put and set at the top of our priorities the same goals sought by the ITU which is to guarantee the bridging of the digital gap and holding partnerships with different sectors.

While the U.A.E. as the forefront, in the implementation of mobile networks, the mobile broadband networks and penetration of the internet among the population, we are still implementing further efforts targeting humanitarian values around the world. We have conveyed a lot of our successful experience was the world to benefit other segments of people.

We have a joint project with the ITU, the virtual academy experience and the collaborative hackathon with the World Summit of Information Society to employ digital data and developing solutions to challenges. The level of supporting our region, we have launched the 1 million Arab coders initiative intended to drive Arab societies to learn the future language.

Today from the U.A.E. we're moving to a digital comprehensive life in partnership with various sectors. This this context, we launched the first digital identity that enables the U.A.E. population to access government and private sector services. Ladies and gentlemen, today we see a great opportunity that the ICT sector offers to build a happier, brighter future for humanity. The U.A.E.'s message has been a message of hope and optimism and we're keen on spreading worldwide that message. All of the projects, it is the hope program that we launched to planet Mars on the 20th of June, 2020 and last but not least my country has been open to experiences and encourage all that want to benefit from its expertise in employing the Information and Communications technologies in order to serve humanity and achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you, and greetings of God be upon you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I invite now Gambia.to take the floor, Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Honorable Minister r, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> GAMBIA: On behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of The Gambia, I extend our profound gratitude to the Government of Romania for hosting the 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to my delegation and I since our arrival in the beautiful City of Bucharest.

Excellencies, the ITU‑PP‑22 is hosted at a crucial time when the world is recovering from an impact of the COVID‑19 pandemic and the global crisis, especially in the developing countries as a result of the war in Ukraine. The Gambia is aware of these facts and is taking into account increasing the evidence of positive collaboration between ICT and improved economy growth.

The Government of the Gambia under the able leadership of His Excellency Adama Barrow, the President, is looking at the Digital Transformation agenda and to this end, it has recently decoupled the Ministry of information, communication and infrastructure into two standalone ministries, the Ministry of information services, the Ministry of communication and digital economy. This policy, this is a clear statement of growing realization of the impact digitalization economy, digitalization technology in the Gambia, developing process and increase the political will to support Digital Transformation process. The Gambia government has identified ICT Sector as the recovery pursuing for national development plan known as the NDP, which is currently being formulated in regard to digitalization of the economy as one of the main pillars of this development plan. The goal is to make the digitalization and accelerating the economic growth, improve the efficiency in both private and public sector and look at the competitiveness in all sectors of the economy. In this regard, my ministry has initiated a large number of structural projects, including the review of information technology, information communication and technology act to introduce the major reform of the legal and regulatory framework to better take into account the innovation and emerging technology. Developing the digital economy, the master plan, currently supported by the E.U., and develop an eGovernment system and platform to introduce the national ID card system, improve the digitalized payment and the payment gateway. Establishing a national data centre.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, the utilization of ICT in providing the services remain a challenge in the Gambia, the country internet penetration stalled at 51.0% of the total population at the start of 2022 with the internet user increased by 2.9% between 2021 and 2022. In fact, in the face of numerous challenges, the ICT sector contribution continues to rise over the years as it accounted 3.5% of the GDP in 2019 and 3.7% in 2021. In fact, the recent growth of the eCommerce platform will take the mobile economy and the digital financial services, developing an approval of Universal Access Fund and the universal access to a quality broadband services, integration of this in the education and agricultural sector especially the rural services.

Digital health intervention includes the deployment of smart ITC driven by the system and application to support the provision and quality health services delivery. To this end, the Ministry of health in the Gambia commenced the registration of insurance digital bar certificate and health insurance ID to all Gambians in June this year. The youth and employment supported given the digital start‑up through training and provision of the capital, the government has also earmarked on the establishment of the rural information, innovation hub to work ensuring digital utilization, innovation, transformation, social economy activities of the people at the grass root.

Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, in conclusion, please allow me to sincerely commend the ITU for the successful organizing a very important role for its continued support over the years. I wish to reaffirm that Gambia is committed to continue further collaboration with the ITU and we look forward to the support of our ‑‑ (technical issue).

>> BAHAMAS: ‑‑ the Government of the Bahamas is offering local Telecom providers a substantial reduction in their communication fees payable to the government to offset the investment in emerging technologies and we anticipate a widespread rollout of these technologies and population centres and underserved communities across the Bahamas. In fact, we are already seeing early signs of success with the rapid expanse of fiberoptic broadband services.

At the same time, we are addressing affordability, especially for the vulnerable amongst us that may be disenfranchised considering the high cost of communication technologies. Connecting the unconnected means bringing the cost of the technologies within the reach of the entire citizenry. It is in this vein that the Bahamas partnered with the regulator to establish a Universal Service Fund that will subsidize the cost of high speed internet for those that cannot afford it. These strategies align succinctly with our ongoing commitment to develop a digital society that benefits all in Bahamas regardless of geographic locations. We have also invested millions into the rapid expansion of eGovernment services.

I must add, our national efforts are under girded by the work we do in foras such as this. The ITU is a global champion for Digital Transformation and the Bahamas fully support its work.

We're a strong voice for our region and other Small Island Developing States and we would like to continue our advocacy with a second term of the ITU Council. We request your support for our candidacy and at the same time for a candidate for BDT Director, Mr. Stephen Bereaux, with his experience and commitment to the ICT advancement across the world, he's the best choice to lead the BDT as it builds on its many recent successes. I invite all nations to stand with us as together we embrace a new era of digital communication where all people can thrive.

Thank you and I wish you a successful Conference in Bucharest.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I invite the representative of Belize, Mr. Michel Chebatt, Minister, Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E‑Governance.

I think we don't have him here.

I move to the next country.

The next country being Mr. Carlson Apis, Secretary for FSM, Department of Transportation, Communications & Infrastructure to take the floor.

>> MICRONESIA: Good morning, Secretary General, due to time limitations, I associate myself with all previous statements of acknowledging and respects and appreciation to Romania, ITU, to all who have joined us this morning.

Having said that, and with all protocols observed, please allow me to begin with some background in my country. We have 607 islands spread out over a million square miles in the Western Pacific Ocean.

With this geographical make‑up, my country faces formidable challenges in its ongoing nation‑building endeavors. As a result, ICT has become a tremendously important development tool as we aim to overcome some of our development challenges, including combatting the risks of natural disasters and climate change.

Due to limited time, I wish to focus my statement on 4 keys issues:

Micronesia is making good progress towards establishing a modern and open communications industry

We have been on a ten‑year path to deliver better outcomes from our communications sector. We need better, more reliable services at lower prices so that everyone can take advantage of what new digital services can deliver.

We have a well‑established regulator to manage market behavior. We have an Open Access Entity that owns the undersea cable infrastructure connecting three of our four states – Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap ‑ together and we have the start of a competitive industry developing.

New Satellite services will make a big difference to Micronesia with our widely spread island based population

The benefits of reform and opening up the market have allowed us to be ready for changes in technology that we couldn’t have imagined at the start. The promise in terms of price and performance of the new Low Earth Orbit Satellite providers offer promises to be revolutionary.

We expect that our well‑developed regulatory environment will make it easy for operators to offer services as soon as their technology is ready. Having a low latency 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) service at affordable rates per month to the smallest of our remote islands is remarkable. Having this sort of capability available anywhere in our nation also means we have a level of redundancy and resiliency for critical services that was only possible with multiple submarine cables. This new connectivity means that our Government and businesses can confidently embrace the cloud and new digital applications.

The development of these technologies and the competition between the operators is a very positive outcome for a country that has often had little choice.

We have a significant investment program that will upgrade all our long life, fixed infrastructure

Our investment program is focusing on completing a submarine cable to our fourth State, Kosrae, which is yet to be connected by submarine cable. This will ensure that all the four main island states will soon have access to FTTH and that we will deliver mobile internet coverage to our remote islands. The goal is for everyone to have access to high speed, reliable connectivity.

The connection to Kosrae, through the East Micronesia Cable System, will also provide further opportunities for the wider North Pacific. This will also provide connections to our neighboring island countries of Kiribati and Nauru. We believe that there are opportunities for both us and our neighbors to aggregate our demand and host content delivery networks in a common location to improve service and lower our shared costs. In this regard, I wish to extend our appreciation to the United States, Australia and Japan who, together, are financing this major development project.

Our ultimate goal is to make digital services available easily to better deliver on growth and development

High prices, slow speeds and poor reliability have made the advances, that many of you take for granted in terms of what cloud services can do, just now possible for us in Micronesia.

We are starting to see what can be done once we have better quality, more reliable internet access. We’re starting to move the FSM Government to modern cloud based email and collaboration tools. That is already making a difference in terms of our efficiency and productivity.

We believe that harnessing these tools will help us deliver better education, health and employment opportunities for our people.

In conclusion, I wish to express my country’s continuing desire to seek the guidance and support of the ITU, including our development partners and friends. With such financial and technical assistance, small island countries like mine can also share and realize the benefits of ICT as a tool of improving the delivery of essential government services to our people.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I invite now Nepal, Mr. Gyanendra Bahadur Karki. , Ministry of Communication and Information Technology.

>> REPUBLIC OF NEPAL: A very good morning. It is an honor to address this Conference on behalf of the Government of Nepal.

We wish to congratulate the Romanian Government for hosting this important conference and to express our appreciation for the warm welcome we have received.

Mr. Chairman, during the last couple of years, we have discussed universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation, their premises, and their impacts. In this context, ITU has an important role in leveraging ICT. And in this dynamic digital ecosystem, organizations must be able to rethink themselves at a faster pace.

Since the last Plenipotentiary, Nepal has built optical superhighways that relentlessly connect every headquarters and provide broadband connectivity to schools, hospitals, and local government offices.

In order to enhance universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation, Nepal is working on the formulation and implementation of policies on Infrastructure sharing, 5G deployment, Cyber security, and Interconnection.

We are providing free Wi‑Fi services in religious and tourist areas as well as free mobile SIM cards for students. We have invested in infrastructures like data centers and internet exchange points to cut down prices and improve the quality of telecommunication services.

In order to accomplish the strategic goals as proposed in the draft ITU Strategic Plan, Nepal has set “accessible modern infrastructure and intensive connectivity” as a long‑term national goal with the development of internal and international interconnectivity as its long‑term national strategy.

Currently, we are implementing the “Digital Nepal Framework” focusing on eight sectors – Digital Foundation, Agriculture, Health, Education, Energy, Tourism, Urban Infrastructure, and Finance followed by the “Digital Nepal Acceleration” program promoting digital connectivity. We are committed to providing 4G connectivity for all schools, hospitals, and administrative offices by the end of this year. In addition, we are at the phase of completion to connect all district headquarters by optical fiber networks.

Due to its adverse geographical orientation, Nepal has been facing the problem of the increased cost of telecommunication services. In this context, we seek support from ITU to bring down the prices of international bandwidth for countries like ours.

We look forward to continuing our long‑term commitment and working in harmony with the ITU to provide universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation.

Under your leadership, Mr. Chairman, and the efforts of distinguished delegations, we are sure to achieve many great outcomes at this conference.

Go digital get connected!

Thank you and Namaste!

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Nepal.

I invite now Timor‑Leste., represented by Mr. Jose Agustinho Da Silvaa, Minister of Transport and Communications, National Communications Authority.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> TIMOR‑LESTE: Firstly, I would express our gratitude to the government and the people of the Romania for a warm hospitality extended to us since we landed in Bucharest for this Conference.

I'm honored to address this Conference on behalf of the Government of Timor‑Leste to reframe our aspiration for a better digital future for everyone. Distinguished Delegates, we joined the ITU 12 years ago in 1210 at the PP in Guadalajara, Mexico. In the short period of time we knew to be successful, digital connectivity, it is more than an exercise, for our country to participate meaningfully in this economy, we have embraced the view that digital infrastructure for us is a necessary precondition for raising that standard for our people. In the same spirit of ITU's commitment for free connect and unite, I'm glad to inform you that we have made progressed improvement in the telecommunication networks and connecting the 1.3 million people in our country one to another and to con be next them to the world. The bandwidths for us has grown from 150 megabit a country in 2010 to over 30 gigabit per second this year. This number has been raised furthermore rapidly, for hundreds of gigabit per second in early of 2024, when we complete this first international cable system. I'm also pleased to inform you that we have been connected by three international mobile services since 2012, the mobile network coverage has accelerated to 90% of our population areas since 2015. Indeed, on the social platforms for Instagram to TikTok, using 4G, data is accessible in all municipality across the country.

Distinguished Delegates, for each of those achievements as I have mentioned, it is achieved with technical assistance meaningfully and generously expended to us by ITU and several Member States. And in particular, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary‑General of ITU, His Excellency, Mr. Houlin Zhao the past and current Directors of the Radiocommunication Development Bureau, and to the regional office and the area office in Jakarta and I would like to thank the administration of Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Portugal along with other distinguished members of the communities.

Distinguished Delegates, looking forward, we aspire to be the digital connected economy where all countries can work collaboratively to progress in the zoning and development. For us, it will continue to redouble our efforts to extend the digital infrastructure to connect those who are not yet connected, most especially, the students and other members in our schools and universities, the rights to digital literacy of our population and to strengthen our capacity to improve our Cybersecurity rates.

Distinguished Delegates, as we prepare our service to integrate our economy and to connect the Digital World of our time, we have high hopes that the Conference will have the true meaning of the two words that we have heard here in this Conference, namely the connected and united. We trust that we can count on the wisdom and collegiality the ITU that's been nurtured by the Member States over the 107 years and ensure that we'll embrace the digital future to connect and unite us all large and small.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I invite the representative of Kuwait, Mr. Omar Al‑Omar, CEO & Chairman, CITRA Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority ‑ CITRA.

>> KUWAIT: In the name of God, the compassionate, merciful, Chair of the Conference, Secretary‑General, Excellency, Minister, heads of delegation, ladies and gentlemen, may the peace and presence of God be upon you.

For me it is an honor, an honor for the Delegation of Kuwait to express the greetings of the government and people of Kuwait. We would also like to express our thanks to the Government of People of Romania for their generous welcome they have extended to us and for the excellent preparations for this Conference.

We would also like to congratulate the Chair of the Conference as well as the Vice‑Chairs and Chairs and Vice‑Chairs of the Committees and Ad Hoc Groups of the Conference.

Chair, we come before you today as a member of this Union to place all of our means at the service of the achievement of the objectives of the ITU and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

We would highlight strategy, policies concepts to frame the new technologies that today have become essential in the daily lives of our people.

Thanks to artificial intelligence, we have been able to achieve a connected world. Ladies and gentlemen, ICTs today are an essential engine for Digital Transformation and here Kuwait is undertaking a strategic study on cloud computing in order to use this technology to offer eGovernance services. The Government of Kuwait is today planning to launch a 5‑go connectivity program for all of the country. We are trying to cover the full extent of our territory using such technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the State of Kuwait is fully aware of the importance of ITU and the highly important role that ITU decisions and resolutions play in the world of ICT development throughout the world putting ICTs to the service to all developing and developed nations alike. That is why today we would like to announce that the State of Kuwait is fully aware of the ITU important role and we would like to maintain its amount of 5 contributory units to participate to the ITU budget. You will note, colleague, since Kuwait joined ITU in 1959 we have played a highly effective role and participated in all ITU activities. We have been a member of the Council since 1982, Kuwait has participated in different activities, meetings, Conferences of ITU, with great effectiveness and dynamism, we're requesting your support once again for the candidature of Kuwait to be a member of the Council for the coming period. Once again, I would conclude, Chair, by thanking Romania, thanking the ITU and wishing you the fullest of success in your work.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Kuwait.

The next country I invite to take the floor, Zimbabwe, Mr. Dingumuzi Phuti, Deputy Minister Ministry of ICT, Postal and Courier Services.

>> ZIMBABWE: Excellencies, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Distinguished Delegates, I bring warm greetings from the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, we would like to congratulate this great nation of Romania for the warm hospitality since our arrival.

At the same time, congratulate to the ITU for successfully hosting this Plenipotentiary thus far. Zimbabwe recognizes the work that ITU is doing on ICT policy formulation and the guidance it gives to Member States with regards to projects aimed at Connecting the Unconnected. We have benefited from the ITU assistance in implementing projects, establishing the internet points and setting up computer emergence response team.

As we implement Zimbabwe's Partner2Connect pledge, that we made at the World Telecommunications Development Conference held in Rwanda this year we have a number of projects and programmes underway and have even gone beyond to further projects that are not necessarily part of the pledge, but I have the privilege, the honor to present them today. To ensure internet access by disadvantaged communities, we are constructing, equipping, connecting an additional 32 ICT computer information centres to already existing 106, with regards to internet connectivity for various economic and social sectors in the country, 1332 health centres, 52 institutions, for People with Disabilities, 1500 schools and 352 politicians have been connected to the internet this year.

Projects to construct an additional 200 kilometers of fiberoptic broadband is underway across the country through public private partnerships to ensure the broadband connectivities are available in all areas of the country and national mobile broadband project under which 3324G stations are deployed across the country, it is currently underway.

On the innovation front, Zimbabwe is a thriving innovation program for digital citizens and part of the program is implemented through hackathons. In the past three years, the hackathons have been conducted for successfully as top cluster of performers implementing projects in eEducation, eAgriculture, eHealth, social services with funding services from the Universal Service Fund. On enhancing the environment, Zimbabwe recognized the policy and in the past four year, has passed laws improving this framework Telecommunication Amendment Bill to modernize the umbrella law of the telecommunications is underway in the final touches for submissions before the parliament. The impact of these efforts cannot be underestimated as our voice has increased from the second quarter of 2022 representing 32.6% growth from 1.7 billion minutes recorded in the first quarter of the year.

Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, all of this could not have been achieved without the research that ITU carries out in various study groups and guidance received from the ITU sectors. We therefore are proud that we have availed our expense to Chair some of the Rapporteur Groups and Working Parties of the Study Groups and will continue to avail these experts and groom other experts to participate in such activities.

We will also convene working with ITU to ensure no one is left unconnected.

On a parting note, may I invite you to kindly consider the humble and resilient child of the world, the humble, tried, trusted family member of the ITU for the candidature of Director of BDT, none other than Dr. Cosmas Zavazava whose reception will be hosted at 5:30 and you are all invited. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Zimbabwe.

The next country I'm inviting to take the floor Lesotho, Mr. Tsoinyana Rapapa, Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology.

>> LESOTHO: Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Kingdom is honored to participate in the ITU 2022, the Plenipotentiary Conference and we look forward to working with other Member States to achieve a successful Conference which will ensure that ITU continues to be an essential group in expanding telecommunications.

The Plenipotentiary Conference is an important place to debate issues with far reaching impacts on governments, businesses, and the people around the world.

Over the last few decades, the increased access and connectivity produced tremendous economic growth allowing citizens to participate in the digital economy and resulted in shared prosperity for billions of people in the world.

How we approach the issues at this Conference with long‑term implications for the competition, also for the competitive global marketplace, as well as investments and future innovations in information and communication technologies.

Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, the Kingdom fully supports and endorses the Strategic Plan of the ITU 2024 to 2027, in particular, its two thematic areas, namely the universal connectivity and sustainable Digital Transformation. In line with the Connect 2030 Agenda, the Kingdom of Lesotho aggressively embarked on a 6 million year project to the rural connect program. This is part of our eGovernment infrastructure program and this arrangement with the Government of Lesotho together with the universal service plan and the African Development Bank is building stations in the rural, underserved areas of Lesotho. The expectation at this point is that by the end of this program, we should have achieved close to 100% coverage.

Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, the Kingdom of Lesotho, a population of just over 2 million people have been able to achieve slightly over 6 of 0% mobile penetration, 79% of our population owns mobile handsets. The greatest challenge though, it is that access to digital skills and the gender digital skills gap, the majority of our people cannot use the mobile beyond the voice, the basic voice actions. In order to address the digital challenge, we have an aggressive project under schools connect, under this project, the schools have connected to the internet and they have internet for three years for free for students and staff of the schools.

Due to lack of financial resources, this initiative is not going at the rate at which we would have appreciated, hence our appeal to the ITU family for assistance. With regards to addressing the gender gap, the Ministry of communication, science, technology has partnered with NGOs to spearhead a project code named Girls Coding Project and under this project, our sisters are part of the ICT skills, including programming for robotics and AI, among others.

Finally, we reaffirm our commitment and availability of the Kingdom and the Government of Lesotho to continue to participate in ITU activities and contributing to the achievements of the objectives of the Union.

As the Kingdom of Lesotho we're not contesting any positions now, but we'll fully participate in the elections with the hope that all Member States will vote for our candidate in the coming ITU PP‑2026.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

It is my pleasure now to invite Oman, Dr Ali Al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications & Information Technology, Ministry of Transport, Communications & Information Technology.

The floor is yours.

>> OMAN: Chair, we are so glad to be able to start our speech in congratulating you on your appointment to be Chair of this Conference. We would also like to thank the people and Government of Romania for the warm welcome that they have accorded to us.

In addition, we would like to congratulate Mr. Houlin Zhao, Secretary‑General for the good management of the ITU as well as what's been done over the last few years. Excellency, Heads of Delegation, Distinguished Delegates, we have a 2040 vision and we have taken into account digitalization and the importance of the digital economy, in particular of eGovernance, we're attempting to implement the ITU objectives in this area. The digital economy provides 5% of our GDP and we have many different implementation and Action Plans including on state‑of‑the‑art technologies, space technologies, industry so on. We're committed to connect the unconnected.

Millions have been spent on ICT and connectivity infrastructure. We're also amongst the pioneers, most countries that have made use of undersea cables in order to provide data to exchange and we have more than 20 such sets of undersea cables and we are encouraging vital investment in infrastructure as well as cloud computing.

The government has also launched an initiative with regard to digital inclusion in 2020. This aims to provide coverage for the population using satellites. We have a national program for government services which is to the tune of 200 million‑dollar, up to 2025, we launched an initiative, in addition to the training of 5,000 young people, both young women and men and this aims to increase revenue, various enterprises have been supported through hundreds of millions of investment, the security, it is also an important issue and 40 countries have profited from our experience, 180 different projects and we're conducting cooperation with other countries in this area and we would like to wish every success to all relative candidates and to all of the delegates in this Plenipotentiary Conference so we can achieve the SDGs. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Oman.

I invite now Cuba to take the floor by his Excellency, Mr. Wilfredo Gonzãlez Vidall, First Vice Minister, Ministerio de Comunicaciones.

>> CUBA: Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, allow me first of all to congratulate the organizers of the important event and thank the government for the warm welcome and hospitality they have provided.

Four years ago we met in Dubai, at that time we agreed on the need to cooperate and to use new technologies to facilitate the processes without suspecting a year later we would suffer from the onslaught of COVID‑19. The pandemic reshaped the intellectual context and proved a global challenge, while the in‑person world stopped the Digital World grew. Dependence on ICTs was accentuated and we have saw the digital divides deepen the predominant social, economic inequalities between persons and states.

In Cuba, we expanded the services, digital television, the use of remote study and work systems, virtual meetings and we guaranteed the continuity of studies through televised programming and digital meeting. Furthermore, research centre, universities, national enterprises, developed different IT solutions country biting decisively to tackling the pandemic, some of these were recognized in the World Summit on the Information Society and others before the UN Department of Economic and social defense. These results were possible as in recent year, Cuba has increased its connectivity, achieving internet penetration of 70% of the population, which represents some 7.5 million connected Cubans.

On‑line services, they increased, extending the use of Cuban payment platform, eCommerce operations and citizen interactions through government websites, nationally and at municipal level. The challenge has been colossal. The country has had to tackle the pandemic in the midst of a global crisis, a conflict in Europe and the economic and financial trade blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba. The blockade which has been in place for more than 60 years continues to be the main impediment for a better flow of information and broader access to internet and ICTs in general for the people of Cuba.

Furthermore, from the United States, ICTs are increasingly being turned against Cuba, used to incentivize and incite criminal and terrorist activities, including cyberattacks on government sites and the media. These illicit, subversive attacks are carried out with full impunity from accounts and devices under the jurisdiction of the government of the United States, constituting a flagrant violation of the principles set down in the preamble of the Constitution of the International Telecommunications Union. In the midst of this adversity, Cuba has progressed toward Digital Transformation as an advanced stage of the process to digitalize society.

We are concluding the drafting of a Digital Transformation policy in Cuba which includes implementation for 2023 to 2030 digital agenda, including among its strategic pillars, digital access infrastructure connectivity and technology. Chair, Secretary‑General, ITU has given impetus to ITUs globally and has done so from a global, ethical way, we believe in the Union, we consider that ITU has the responsibility and the tools to continue to call on Member States to strive for a better world of digital inclusion.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, I invite Thailand, Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck, Chairman, National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission.

Professor, the floor is yours.

>> THAILAND: Excellency Ministers, Ambassadors and Heads of Delegations, Distinguished participants, Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to attend this Plenipotentiary Conference, warmly hosted by the Government of Romania.

First, allow me to share with you about what we have done, what we are doing and what we will do next. In Thailand, we continue to work with relevant stakeholders in expanding connectivity and broadband usage that will lead to the achievement of the Connect 2030 Agenda.

For mobile broadband, Thailand has imposed coverage obligations on licensees to support mobile broadband coverage, which has resulted in 98.8% of population covered by at least 3G with mobile broadband price under 2% of monthly GNI per capita.

For fixed broadband, Thailand has implemented our Village Broadband Internet Project called “Net Pracharat”. The project has led to successful expansion of fixed broadband networks to all villages where service was not available before. We are Connecting the Unconnected. We provided training to improve the digital skills for public internet centres in most rural areas across the Kingdom, with this, digital economy can be a reality in the future. For certain specific fields such as healthcare, we are installing digital in the field, we understand many patients, namely the bedridden, it would be such a burden to the family and we want to connect them to a primary care provider so some of the issues can be solved on‑line. COVID‑19 has made this a universal right a privilege. We have also promoted the 5G in smart hospital, a medical school and doctors and nurses will develop their own artificial intelligence platform. Thailand has always supported ITU and has been very happy to be the home office to Asia‑Pacific community. With these credential, Thailand is aiming for reelection as ITU Council member of the Region E, and we need your support. We also are looking at hosting the next WTDC for 2025 and the discussion is with ITU, it is ongoing.

I would like to emphasize again that our commitment to Connect 2030 Agenda and we want to continue our work as ITU Councilor and we strongly believe that digital connectivity is a basic Human Rights.

Thank you for your attention and opportunity to be here. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Thailand.

I invite now the Republic of Congo, Mr. Leon Juste Ibombo, Ministre , MinistÃ¨re des Postes, des TÃ©lÃ©communications et de l'Economie numÃ©rique.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Chair of the Plenipotentiary Conference, 2022, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Ministers, dear colleagues, Heads of Delegations, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor, immense pleasure to be taking the floor on behalf of the government at this 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU.

I would like to extend my thanks to Romania, the host country for PP‑22 for the warm welcome with which they have greeted all of the delegations at this Conference. We would also like to congratulate you, Chair, as you have been elected to be Chair of this Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, the UN has granted the ITU the mission of connecting the world and the ITU has accomplished this mission to a great extent but must still continue to work to connect the 3 billion people who are still unconnected throughout the world. Our challenge, as the International Telecommunications Union is duel, we must reduce access disparities and reduce the digital divide. Many people are still excluded from social, economic opportunities which are provided by ICTs, and our country, Congo, wishes to participate fully in accomplishing this mission. We have a program which has been issued by the President of the Republic of Congo, and under that, the government has implemented an ambitious program allowing us to connect more than 60% of the population to broadband networks and services.

Under this vision, the digital Congo, 2025, we aim to provide universal coverage to ICTs, and we have been able to connect more than 150,000 people in rural areas as well as many different schools between 2020 and 2022 allowing us to reduce the digital divide and contribute to the development of a digital economy and financial digital inclusion using mobile services.

Moreover, through the Partner2Connect program, conducted with the ITU, we are continuing our activity in order to reduce the digital divide. To assist the ITU in tackling the new challenges, for the next four year, Congo will be proposing one of our brothers to take up the post of the Director of the BDT. We would like to ask you to support the Congo in this on behalf of the government, I wish to wish every success to all participants in our Conference.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I invite Turkey to take the floor. And we have the coffee break that we'll be having in 2 minutes. If Turkey is not ready to take the floor, I tell you that there is a coffee break offered by Turkey.

We will close this session for now and we'll meet back here at 15 past 11:00. So in 25 minutes.

Please, Turkey you have the floor.

>> TURKEY: To all colleagues, Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, Turkey is a candidate for reelection to the ITU Council from our region. We would like to offer you well‑known Turkish hospitalities this morning. Join us at the coffee break hosted by the Republic of Turkey.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Turkey.

We'll have a coffee break now and meet back here at 15 past 11:00, in 25 minutes.

(Break).

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Dear colleague, let me give you information. This morning, we will have five speakers on the list, but we found that our Ministers, they're normally keeping to the 3‑minute limit, so that we can finish our sessions as scheduled. However, we tried to see if we can invite the host of speakers we planned tomorrow to join us today, either this morning or this afternoon.

So my team just contacted them. I think that we try to get as many speakers as we can find and then we'll try to invite them to speak today instead of tomorrow.

However, very soon we'll start this session.

I hope this morning that we can, you know, give those who are ready to speak a chance to speak this morning.

Thank you very much.

Please be patient.

>> CHAIR: Dear colleague, I'm inviting you to take your seats so that we can proceed with the policy statements we have for today.

I invite the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Askhat Orazbek, Vice‑Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Kazakhstan.

>> KAZAKHASTAN: Thank you so much. Thank you, Your Excellency, distinguished Chairman, Secretary‑General, Minister, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great honor for me to be able to speak on behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan that the important international forum. I thank the Government of Romania for their hospitality and for all of the work that you have done to ensure the success of this Conference. As you know, ICTs are an important factor for our economic competitiveness, enhancing the quality of life of our populations. ICT development is strategically important for us for a number of reasons because of the size of our territory and low population density. And the fact that it is in the centre of Eurasia with certain advantages in terms of transport corridors throughout the whole of the region. All major and small towns in Kazakhstan have 4G coverage and some have seen the 5G plan, we plan to ensure that all major cities will have this access.

The state organized projects under which we provided the internet to 928 villages. Overall, our schools, they have access to the internet and moreover, Kazakhstan is a leader in the region under the Giga project conducted dually with ITU and whose objective is to connect each school in the world to the internet.

Between 2020 and 2022, Kazakhstan has had the most affordable fixed internet amongst the countries in Central Asia and its internet speeds have gone up by 22%. We have two national geostationary satellites providing Telecom services and broadcasting to all national operators and our population.

Currently we're also looking at providing communication services for our neighbors as well. Moreover, we're looking at cooperation with operators of low orbit satellite grouping in order to fully cover the rest of our territory with broadband coverage.

We are engaged on an issue transition to a digital society and developing high‑quality ITU infrastructure of human capital and digitalizing our economy and establishing innovative ecosystem. Our economy has shown high digital resilience and expansion of digital solutions throughout all spheres. This has been shown by our high ranking in many different international indexes. For example, we hold the 11th place in the UN on‑line services index, the 29th ranking for the eGovernment development index and the 31st ranking for the Cybersecurity index.

We aim to be a state that listens and we have been able to provide digital tools to all, including Persons with Disabilities. We have also managed to digitalize many of our school textbooks and the banking sectors and energy and agriculture have been covered by digitalization. Our world is changing and we need to adapt to the major global challenges in technologies and ensure a breakthrough in connecting the world to broadband. For this, we need to constantly keep up to date with emerging ICTs and Telecoms. The ITU's activities and similar international events are, in fact, a forum to ensure this.

Kazakhstan stands ready to share expertise and has put forward a highly qualified technical expert to be an RB member with great experience and knowledge on telecommunications and has made an invaluable contribution to developing the sector throughout his career. We would like to ask for your support by working together, we can manage to do more and achieve more bridging the digital with divide and we wish everyone a successful, fruitful Conference.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Republic of Kazakhstan.

I invite the representative of Jordan, His Excellency, Mr. Bassam Al Sarhan, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners / CEOTelecommunications Regulatory Commission.

>> JORDAN: Ladies and gentlemen, at the outset, allow me on behalf of the government and Kingdom of Jordan and the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to extend the sincere thanks and appreciation to the government and to the State of Romania for hosting this Conference and for the warm, generous hospitality we enjoy in this wonderful city Bucharest.

We would also like to thank Mr. Houlin Zhao and his team and all the sector Directors for the contributions made during the tenure at the ITU.

The rapid development in the sector, increasing the ability to process data and artificial intelligence led to unprecedented transformation in the production process and contributed to economic and social development in all the world's developed and Developing Countries. It is our belief that this development in the ICT sector would not have been possible without the coordination and the great role played by the ITU. Since its founding in 1965 the ITU played a pivotal role in improving, developing the telecommunication sector through setting general policy, approving Strategic Plans for the sector and distributing the World Radio Spectrums and satellite orbits and setting standards for ensuring the smooth operation of the networks and the technologies and enabling access to ICT to achieve and maximize the benefits for all, especially those societies that suffer from a lack of services. The federation is committed to connecting all people in the world wherever they live and whatever their means as nearly a third of the world's population in 2022 is still not connected to the internet.

The Kingdom of Jordan has always actively participated in the work and activities of the ITU. Out of its firm belief and importance of the role the ITU takes in the coordination of roles and strategies of the ICT sector, Jordan is committed to working with all members to achieve the ITU vision of connecting the world and supporting all initiatives in ITs to achieve Digital Transformation and build a comprehensive society that enables societies to achieve SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Jordan government has worked over the years to support the peace in the Middle East and to support the UN and various fields and bares responsibilities to regional conflicts and disputes and forced migration since 1948, Jordan built necessary infrastructure to accommodate the large number of refugees and displaced person, despite its limited financial resources. It is one of the largest refugee hosting countries in the world with an estimated number of about 20 million refugees compared to the Jordanian population of less than 8 million citizens. We have responsibility by providing telecommunication services to refugees, the camps and places of residence to ensure inclusion and contribute to enhancing the digital capabilities. The government also worked during the COVID pandemic with the transition to remote work and education to provide additional frequencies, free of charge to operators to ensure the provision of connectivity and networking to all segments of society efficiently and effectively.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jordan's candidacy today for had he been ship in the ITU Council for the region comes from the conviction and distinguished relation was all Member States of the ITU and its desire and ability to provide support to the ITU and Member States in formulate, implementing public policies related to the ICT sector.

From this electric turn, we call on all friendly countries to support Jordan's candidacy for membership in the ITU region, and finally allow me to express to you my great pride and honor for being present among you today, thanking you all for your kind listening and wishing everyone success in the activities of the Conference for the service of all humanity.

I wish you all the best.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Jordan.

The next country I invite to take the floor, Grenada, Mr. Vincent Roberts, Chairman of the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

>> GRENADA: Thank you. Good morning.

I would begin by congratulating Romania for hosting such an important Conference. Your hospitality as well as your facilities are equally impressive.

I am honored to be representing Grenada, a Small Island State in the Caribbean and I bring greetings from my Prime Minister, the honorable, a strong advocate for preservation of our environment, opportunities for our youth and the Digital Transformation of our country. We are a member of the Caribbean Telecommunication Union and together with other members here present, we represent our region with at least 14 votes and a pursuit of opportunities to achieve the UN's strategic Development Goals. The successful integration of ICTs into the digital economy of our country and region will require a coordinated and comprehensive approach of participation and collaboration. We have no choice now but to advance the effective partnerships in our region through collaboration and leveraging of global partnerships. We still do not have a digital identification for our citizens, equally important and still lacking, it is a system of physical addressing and address for everyone. This is necessary for the delivery of goods, the location of a home in the event of a health or other emergency, and are critical if we are to build a digital economy.

Today an address can be considered a basic Human Rights and form an important basis on which society can function. If these critical systems are to be realized in the immediate future we must explore diversified strategies for resource mobilization. The challenges we face as a global community and especially as small Island States are unprecedented. Global warming, poverty, disease, war and the threat of war, as well as inequality, rank among the most pressing global issues today. These challenges are often too complex to be met by any one government or organization, and especially by small states like ours, aspiring to transform our country.

Creating solutions require innovation, ingenuity, collaboration and cooperation across diverse sectors and require building partnership, we recognize the dynamic partnerships are a critical success factor in obtaining Sustainable Development objectives nationally, regionally and internationally. This is most evidence today as countries and delegates try to build partnerships in order to be victorious in various elections.

We wish this would continue beyond Bucharest.

Finally, Mr. President, we take this opportunity to commit our support to our colleague from the Caribbean, Mr. Stephen Bereaux in the effort to be elected as Director of Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and we ask for all to vote for Mr. Stephen Bereaux and Bahamas and Cuba for Council in Region A. I thank you.

>> CHAIR: I see a request for the floor, no requests for the floor will be taken during policy statements.

We'll proceed with the next country, Dominican Republic, Dr. Nelson Arroyo Perdomo, Presidente del Consejo Directivo del Instituto Dominicano de las TelecomunicacionesIndotel.

The floor is yours.

>> DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: A very good morning to the distinguished assembly, Secretary‑General, all authorities of the Telecommunication Union.

On behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic, I thank you for the opportunity to address you all here this morning. I would like to thank the authorities of Romania for the organization of this event and for the warm welcome to us all. So that we can share ideas referring to the development of this so important sector.

In the world we see many changes, and 2020 certainly brought with it a significant change with the COVID pandemic this obliged governments throughout the world to identify their strengths and their weaknesses. We could witness the importance of telecommunications as a crosscutting tool to all societies and we were also able to identify our own weaknesses. For example, in the particular case of the Dominican Republic, we had to face the challenge of carrying out a virtual year. This meant that the Dominican government had to overcome that situation and the President of the republic in order to create 539‑20 declaring the highest national interest, the universal right to the latest generation broadband access and the productive use of ICTs.

One of the measures that we wanted to implement for this, it is that first we tended the 5.5 gigahertz and the implication of the ‑‑ implementation of the 5G technologies in the Dominican Republic. We became the first central and Caribbean country with the use of these commercial networks and one of the first in Latin America. We also cleared the 700 band and we initiated a process which lasted some 23 years, it had been pending to sign new concessionary contracts with the main telecommunication service providers of the country which brought about not only revenue for the Dominican state but also saw them undertake commitments to bring coverage to unserved areas. Furthermore, we're implementing the widest ever connectivity program ever in the history of the Dominican Republic with 800 million‑dollars of investment and we'll be taking fiber optics to the 24 regions of the country that do not yet have it. The objective is there will be no place left without fiberoptics.

We're implementing regulatory measures for the implementation of the new practices in innovation. We have implemented resolutions in the area of Cybersecurity, an area we know is very much a contemporary challenge. We are implementing a broad program of wi‑fi points across the country in areas that are not connected.

For 2023 we will see the entry of terrestrial digital television, we're also seeking the installation of further enterprises to provide satellite internet services. Our country is achieving much in this area. If we know challenges, they still lie ahead, but with our effort and our will of our government through the establishment of the Digital Transformation strategy 2030 we will ensure that the Dominican Republic has safer, more secure, stronger, more robust telecommunication systems.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Dominican Republic.

I invite now Liberia to take the floor, Mr. Cooper Kruah, Minister of posts and Telecommunications Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication.

>> LIBERIA: Mr. Secretary‑General of the ITU, officers of the ITU, Mr. President of the Conference, ladies and gentlemen, our delegation brings you greetings from the President of the people of Liberia and take this time to congratulate the President and people of the Republic of Romania on this unique occasion and wonderful display of hard work in hosting the 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference. We also take this time to allow the efforts of the Secretary‑General of ITU Houlin Zhao and other leaders, the researcher, the academic, practitioner, technicians, others in one environment, to discuss the issues relevant to building a better digital future for all.

We are playing a critical role in accelerating the transformation of our country's from one of poverty to a middle class nation. The government has been focused on the implementation outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society at national level. At the same time, working towards and achieving all internationally agreed Development Goals including Vision 2030, as part of this effort, Liberia gives due regard to the role of ICT and pledge to the ICT sector as best underscored by the commitment demonstrated to the report it provides to the sector. Liberia also recognized the ICT sector as an enabler of social and economic development and there by prompting the use, the need to update the 2010 policy to make it relevant to the current incidents of the states and supporting the objective of the agenda for prosperity and development.

In this respect, the 2019 to 2024 ICT policy was adopted by the cabinet to update the 2010 policy with emerging trends in the ICT sector. Particularly the rise of convergence and technology and digital broadcasting, eService, new technologies and the provision of universal access to those social inclusion. Additionally, the Government of Liberia is aware of the need to provide the infrastructure with advancements to ensure the large connectivity and the connection to the fiberoptic for broadband connectivity is evidence of this.

Currently, a private company has hosted the infrastructure providers with 180 kilometers of fiber around our capital city and providing services to all MNOs and RSPs, and the Government of Liberia planned to build over 350 kilometers of fiber backbone to the border of Guinea and others. Liberia is working with the community on this cable project, the broadband development within the territories of concerned countries, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone. And coincidentally, the same countries have one cable landing station connecting them to the cable. The proposed cable, it will run with three units and future expansion for the north and South respectively. Those efforts are made to ensure that the connectivity is provided to the consumers and providing such needed and guaranteed redundancy in the national connectivity for our country.

Your Excellency, the era of technology is here and it cannot be ignored. The development of every country is now linked to how much the country consumes ICT. The Minister of post and telecommunication has a responsibility to develop policies and standards that will guide the sector, and in light of, this I'm pleased to inform this body that the Government of Liberia has begun to identify the innovative ways to utilize the bandwidth provided by us, the optical fiber cable for the integration of ICTs in all sectors to accelerate the realization of the model of Liberia, that's a technology‑based economy. Our cybercrime act of 2021 is currently at the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia to be enacted. The cybercrime act will provide for the prohibition, prevention, detection and response and prosecution of cybercrime in Liberia. Not only that, the data protection has also been in the process to be submitted to the secretary for onward submission to the national law. The data protection law, it will provide a legal framework of protection for privacy of data related to collection, processing, transmission, service and use of personal data without prejudice to the general interest of the state.

However, there is financial difficulties associated with what we do in this ICT sector and we remain committed to enhance the deficiency of ICT in all areas to deliver efficient public service to all customers of the public sector. Our government understands the use of ICT for Sustainable Development and it cannot be over emphasized, that's why the government continues to put in place measures that will ensure all of its goals are met.

For example, the government has approved a program called School Connect which is intended to provide internet services to our schools around the country. In addition, many universities are developing programmes that incorporate technological advances and trends.

Finally, Your Excellency, the Government of Liberia to the Minister of the Post and Telecommunication will continue to embark on policy reform with private, public sector partnerships as part of the plan. I'm convinced that with the spirit of partnership in the sector, achieving our goals as a country will be a success. I cannot over emphasize the role that ITU has played and will continue to play in Liberia's path for development. Sectors such as finance, health, education, agriculture and the government have embraced technology for management of information, enhancement of service delivery to reach the public more effectively and efficiently and at an affordable price.

Most importantly, Excellencies, as you are aware, the Government of Liberia has begun its program a few years ago, let me inform you of the steady progress but with huge financial challenges. The government received some multilateral partner as few years back and has begun the implementation of the program. Our project was successful and the implementation, it is ongoing. However, this is expected to be in a dessert with no connection, we therefore ask you to invest more in the area of universal access if more is to be done for rural inhabitants in a broader connectivity for all, across the landscape of Liberia, there is no other way to put this, but to describe it as such.

We have an unwavering commitment to using ICTs as an enabler to sustain our Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I invite now the representative to take the floor, Uruguay, Mr. GuzmÃ¡n ACOSTA Y LARANational Director, Ministerio de Industria, EnergÃa y MinerÃa.

>> URUGUAY: Good afternoon, Chair, Secretary‑General, authorities of the ITU:

It is a distinct honor for us to be here at this distinguished international event and I would also like to thank the authorities of the Government of Romania.

Uruguay is a small country, between two very large ones. As a small country, we are obliged in spirit and at heart to work with international cooperation through international organizations. We have participated in ITU since 1907 and also in Latin America and pa that America organizations. We're deeply committed to the development of telecommunications and promoting mechanisms allowing us to bridge digital divides.

Universalizing the access to internet, promoting Internet of Things. Uruguay has invested publicly in the development of telecommunication by the state telecommunications authority and Uruguay has 76% of households with access to fiberoptics, 81% of all services are fiberoptic and we have brought coverage ‑‑ broad coverage. We didn't stop there. We have committed to continue to work to ensure we bring fiberoptics out to every part of the country.

One of the challenges that we are assuming, it is to overcome our issues as a small country, we have submarine subcables to improve data traffic. We have the plan with one computer per child ensured in the areas of at most in need in public schools and we're committed to continue to work on quality of service and connectivity. We're currently working to rollout 5G technology via an upcoming auction of spectrum with three operators who have all been already carrying out important operations overseeing that with regulatory policy. We are amending our regulations to allow huge investment through infrastructure sharing, targeting improved quality of service and affordability which are important elements for our society.

Uruguay is standing out as regional technological hub promoting innovation, for the Internet of Things via a laboratory working on artificial intelligence, the government is providing great impetus to that initiative. I would like to thank all of you for the support that you have given to Uruguay, with the support we're providing to you with our representative Mario Maniewicz who represented us actively as Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau. I would like to sign off by taking up his words, telecommunications are a key enabler, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and build a world where all development is sustainable and available for everyone everywhere.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Uruguay.

Thanks to all the Ministers, Excellencies that shared views with us today, the views of different countries and what they're doing in their countries for all of the policy statements that were delivered today.

As we have no other countries for this Plenary on our list for general policy statements I invite now the Secretariat to take the floor. They have announcements.

Australia, you have the floor.

>> AUSTRALIA: Thank you. I would like to invite people to a lunch reception at 1:30 and we'll have a special photo opportunity for delegates at the lunch as well.

Hopefully we'll see lots of you there.

>> CHAIR: Kenya, would you like to take the floor as well.

If not, I know that Kenya is hosting a reception this afternoon as well. Please.

>> KENYA: Chairman, Secretary‑General, leadership of the ITU, the Kenya government would like to invite you for a lunch reception at 12:30 today.

We also are seeking your support for the ITU Council seat in Region D. You are all very welcome.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you for the invitations.

We'll end this Plenary now and announce that we're meeting back here at 4:30 and we'll proceed with our agenda for today to continue with general policy statements and other businesses in our agenda, the third point.

Thank you very much for this session. Enjoy your lunch reception. Thank you.

(Fourth Plenary concluded at 12:12 EEST)

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