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PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE 2022

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

FIFTH PLENARY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

14:30 EEST

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>> CHAIR: Dear delegates, please take your seats. We'll start soon. Thank you.

Thank you for being back. We'll proceed with our fifth Plenary and with the agenda for today that was approved this morning.

Before continuing with the general policy statements, I'll give the floor to the Secretary of The Plenary for a short information.

>> SECRETARIAT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So just to let you know, we have been informed about a few COVID cases. Please, I mean, although safety measures and restrictions for COVID have been lifted in Romania, it is your individual responsibility, it is very important, if you have any symptom, please kindly do not come to the venue and stay in the hotel.

If you have any contact with the health authority from Romania please kindly be nice and follow the instruction they will be giving to you. We thank you very much for your cooperation.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Secretary of The Plenary for this announcement.

Our health is the most important thing during this Conference. Please be careful.

We'll start our policy statements for this Plenary session with Gabon. I'm inviting Her Excellency, Ms. Huguette Blanche Abodo YombiyenI, MinistÃ¨re de l'Ã©conomie numÃ©rique, the floor is yours.

>> GABON: Chair of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, 2022, Secretary‑General of the International Telecommunication Union, Excellency, Heads of Delegation, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I'm glad to have the opportunity to express to this august assembly on behalf of the President of the Republic, Head of State, His Excellency, and the delegation accompanying me and on my own behalf, the deep gratitude to the country of Romania for their hospitality and for all arrangements that have been put in place to allow us to have a pleasant stay in this very beautiful country.

I also have the pleasure on behalf of the Government of Gabon to address my sincere congratulations to you as you have been appointed to head up the Bureau in organizing this very important meeting. I also wish to commend the whole of the ITU staff and the Bureau, we're assisting you in organizing this Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU in 2022.

Ladies and gentlemen, Gabon views this as a strategic lever for economic growth, that's why the sector has received particular focus in awful the different Strategic Plans adopted by the Government of Gabon.

Gabon as member of the ITU is an acting policy to implement the 2030, Connect 2030 program. In terms of regulations, following enactment on law on electronic communications and law on electronic transaction, soon Gabon will be finalizing the law on Cybersecurity and cybercrime. The legal regulatory framework will recognize ‑‑ will be indispensable to curb the risk and manage the threats and challenges linked to innovation. Moreover, in terms of connectivity, our country is continuing the deployment of the national fiberoptic backbone in order to connect all the towns and villages as well as expanding transporter connectivity with our neighbors.

Our universal service project which has guaranteed funding will soon be launched. These efforts have allowed our country to achieve a penetration rate of 165% as well as an internet penetration rate of 123.5%. 97% of this is mobile internet. The development of FTTH, since 2018 has seen strong growth, in particular in the two major cities of our country. Gabon is also part of the one Africa network project which has been led by the Smart Africa Alliance.

In order to make use of this new infrastructure that's been deployed, the government has launched a large scale digitalization project of the administration. Our country holds the ambition to fully digitalize its administrative services. We have several applications which are operational now such as, for example, our eVisa for immigration service, eTax statement, our ePay slip for officials, and eEducation, vector, used for state budget services and our system that is used for customs. These examples show our country's willingness to place the digital sphere at the heart of its development strategy.

Moreover, we have not overlooked the importance of incubators to assist start‑ups as well as to bolster this digital ecosystem. Ladies and gentlemen, Gabon takes part actively in the Connect 2030 program and will spare no effort in order to accomplish the goals that have been outlined.

Chair, distinguished guests, in conclusion, I would like to wish this 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference every success.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I invite now the next country, Sudan, represented by Mr. Adil Elhussein, Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Transformation.

>> SUDAN: Thank you in, the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful, Chair, Secretary‑General, Heads of sectors, Heads of Delegation, good afternoon, everyone.

At the outset, I would convey to you and to the remaining ‑‑ to the Romania government the greetings of the people of Sudan and wish every success to this Conference. We have been closely following the preparations within the Arab and African regions for this Conference. We have worked to ensure the success of this Conference.

We also are sure that all regions have the same objective in this regard. I would like to commend the ITU for what's been achieved as well as support provided for infrastructure, legislation, regulations in order to ensure connectivity throughout the world.

Today we're seeing an internet boom and the ITU has a pioneering role in this area in order to guide our peoples when it comes to ICTs. This internet boom will help us in various different spheres such as education and health and so on. ITU is also assisting young people to take advantage of ICTs and telecommunications and providing support to various countries throughout the world when it comes to the Digital Transformation.

Enterprises make use of ICTs and are dependent on the different spheres of life. Sudan has also seen this internet boom in our country and we are committed to implementing the Action Plan that was the Summit, both the events held in Tunis and that held in Geneva and the outcomes. We stand ready to ensure connectivity of African countries, in particularly our neighboring countries which are landlocked.

Sudan has a major role to play when it comes to connectivity for the unconnected and, moreover, has focused its efforts on creating an integrated digital society aiming to strengthen entrepreneurship and build capacity within our country. We would like to affirm the support of Sudan for all of the activities of the ITU and in particular the activities aiming to bridge the digital divide between countries which are more developed or less developed in this area. We have launched a number of initiatives both local and regional in that regard.

Ladies and gentlemen, the official reports show that a third of the people in the world are not connected to the internet and most are to be found in the African continent. In fact, 40% of Africans have no internet access, it is therefore crucial to connect them. Studies have also shown that there is a deceleration of infrastructure investment which is slowing down and so therefore it seems that we have great difficulties in achieving the goal of connecting the world by 2030 and therefore we would like to launch a call to all of our colleagues a message of hope that we will all be able to focus on helping the least developed countries to guarantee their connectivity ensuring that they can fully take on development.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, I would like to thank the people and Government of Romania for hosting this Conference and we would also like to thank all of those who have worked to ensure that the Conference runs smoothly. We do hope that this Conference will reach decisions and recommendations which are if line with the aspirations of developing countries. We would like to wish every success to this Conference in launching initiatives and also in implementing the various commitments we have in order to bridge the digital divide as well as develop telecommunication networks.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Sudan.

I invite Bhutan, Mr. Karma D. Wangdi, Ministry of Information and Communications.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> BHUTAN: Honorable Chair, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I'm honored to address the august gathering here in Bucharest. On behalf of the Government of Bhutan, I wish to express our gratitude to the Romania government and ITU for hosting this very important Conference.

Before I begin, allow me to acknowledge the level of ICT development achieved by our host country Romania. Likewise, please also accept my sincere appreciation on the role played by the ITU for noting the development of ICT all around the world and for bringing us together today in this global ICT development in the stakeholders meeting today.

As ICT becomes the main enabler for socio‑economic development, my government remains steadfast in our commitment to ensure, all our communities have access to meaningful and safe connectivity. Since the last Plenipotentiary Conference in 2018, the Government of Bhutan has initiated, and is implementing, an ambitious “Digital Flagship & Universal Connectivity Program”. In alignment with the strategic vision of the ITU, our focus has been to promote growth, inclusiveness, sustainability, and innovation.

Under the Digital Flagship Program of my Government, works are ongoing to develop a Digital Identity system to enhance public service delivery, and strengthen the Research and Education Network, so that our students and researchers, have access to outside knowledge/resources. We have connected over 1,400 agencies with our Government Network, to ensure safety and security. In addition, we are also working on developing an “Integrated Citizen Services system”, in the field of Trade & Finance. One of the lessons learnt, from the Pandemic, is the importance of online education and health services. Our efforts are now focused towards digitizing our schools and health systems, and investments are being made to build a more robust and reliable infrastructure.

We are also endeavoring to improve broadband connectivity, by implementing “Fiber to The Home” (FTTH) technology, and we plan are to connect 90% of our urban households to the fiber network. This increased coverage through the FTTH network, is expected to bring down the cost of leased line services.

Likewise, with the mission to ensure Universal Connectivity, the RGoB has successfully implemented 5 Phases of the Rural Connectivity Program (RCP), and we are currently implementing the 6th Phase. As of date, more than 780 remote villages, have been connected through the RCPs.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Now, as the global ICT community welcomes the New Management at the ITU, I would like to reiterate, the importance of continuity, and the efforts of the ITU, in taking cognizance of the interests of developing and land‑locked countries like Bhutan. For us, the role of ITU in ensuring equal access to international internet exchange points, equal access to space and satellite, and acceptable global ICT/Telecommunication standards are crucial. I am very hopeful that the new ITU management, would be considerate towards meeting these needs. The potential risk and threat of cyber security will increase with everything around us getting digitalized. Thereupon, I would like to urge the ITU to continue providing support, in addressing the threats of cybersecurity.

Before I conclude, on behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan, I would like to offer our sincere gratitude, to His Excellency, the Secretary General and the ITU Management, for the hard work and exemplary commitments, in successfully carrying forward the vision of the ITU, during the last four years.

Let me also take this opportunity; to Congratulate and Welcome in advance, The Secretary General elect and your new ITU Lead Team, in this week’s elections.

My sincere wishes and prayers, for a successful ITU‑PP22.

Thank You & Tashi Delek!

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

The next country that I'm inviting to take the floor is Samoa, Mr. Toelupe Onesemo, Minister of Communication and Information Technology.

>> SAMOA: Talofa lava and Warm Greetings from the Independent State of Samoa.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for the hosting of the ITU Plenipot 2022. Excellency, let me start by echoing the realities that the

World has changed rapidly due to the advancement of information and communication technology and digital transformation. The COVID19 Pandemic has also raised the level of awareness and recognition by Government Leaders, of the importance of digital technologies, which need to be inclusive, secure and affordable, for all citizens, to improve the delivery of social services. As such, the Government of Samoa will continue to prioritize the development of relevant policies and regulations to address the challenges of connectivity., some of the unconnected places are the remote islands of the Pacific, with small populations, minimal revenues to service provider, developing states, they have the challenge of securing sustainable connectivities. The youth in those unconnected areas are the next generations of leaders of our islands that have yet to realize the power of internet access. Some of the unconnected schools in the villages are facing high costs of equipments and devices due to the price of oil and the impact of wars with the global economy, the cost of natural disasters through the developments and the impact of Climate Change with pandemics, small economies are more vulnerable now than ever Mr. President, we have faith in our Union, as declarations have confirmed, the commitment to provide support for developing countries addressing constraints, looking at the technologies and how to integrate them in all sectors, to leverage full economic potentials. The ITU commitment among members and key stakeholders, partnerships between developed and the developing countries to share technologies, knowledge and the bridging of digital divides.

The low digital capacity and skills in the islands like Samoa, education, capacity building for youth, is critical, access to digital skills and tools are essential for the future. The government remains committed to ITU and mandates, leading to innovative solutions for connectivity. We will continue working with our regional organizations, multilateral, bilateral partners and pursue our target for a better future, last but not least, for the first time in 155 ‑‑ 157 years of ITU, a Pacific Island has nominated for an ITU management position, Mrs. Gisa Fuatai Purcell, for your Deputy Secretary‑General. The Pacific Islands nomination, it is a voice for vulnerable states.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Samoa.

The next country

5Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Hassel Bacchus, Minister of Digital Transformation.

Ministry of Digital Transformation, the floor is yours.

>> TRINIDAD and TOBAGO: I'm having problems here. One second.

>> CHAIR: Take your time, no worries.

Should we take another country? That's fine or ‑‑

>> TRINIDAD and TOBAGO: Chairman, Secretary‑General, Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Members, it is an honor to address this ITU PP‑22 and share Trinidad and Tobago’s vision for Digital Transformation. My sincerest thanks go to the Government of Romania and the people of the beautiful city of Bucharest for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality. I also wish to convey my deep appreciation to the ITU, through the BDT Caribbean Area Office, for its unwavering support for the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean.

For us, connectivity, and the effective deployment of ICTs, is not a mere afterthought, but a matter of our national survival. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes Digital Technology as a key enabler for sustainable development, a fact reinforced by the COVID‑19 pandemic.

The theme of PP‑22, Connect and Unite, and its two Strategic Goals, identified under the Union’s Strategic Plan 2024‑2027, are exquisitely aligned with our country’s Digital Transformation Strategy.

Goal #1: Universal Connectivity is reflected in Trinidad and Tobago’s policy that access to affordable, reliable and capable Broadband Internet is a Public Good. Despite 81% of households having Internet Access, we know that more must be done to ensure that no one is left behind. We also accept that our solutions must be developed in partnership with, and not at the expense of the private sector, and our stakeholders including civil society and citizens.

Trinidad and Tobago’s Digital Transformation Strategy also reflects the objectives identified under Goal #2: Sustainable Digital Transformation. Examples include our Developer’s Hub; a partnership between the private sector and government to grow the local software developer and coding communities. Another is the Connected Communities initiative, which will drive the development of a suite of apps to benefit residents and businesses in selected communities.

As we rapidly evolve in the digital world, we invite you to view us as the place to invest and conduct business. In this context, our success and sustainability can only be achieved through partnerships and investments. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago is open and ready to embrace these opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our entire Digital Transformation approach is based on harnessing the power of Collaboration and Partnership as exemplified by:

The involvement of national stakeholders as equal partners in developing our National DT Strategy for 2023‑2026; and.

The pursuit of bilateral engagements with exemplar countries and international Development Partners such as the IDB, UNDP and ITU.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago subscribes fully to the conference’s theme of Connect and Unite and endorses the ITU Strategic Plan, 2024‑2027.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Trinidad and Tobago, for your statement.

I invite now Iraq to take the floor by His Excellency Mr. Arkan Shihab Ahmed Al‑Shaibani, Minister, Ministry of Communications, the floor is yours.

>> IRAQ: Ladies and gentlemen, I would convey greetings to you and also like to thank the Republic of Romania as well as its people and in particular the Minister of telecommunications, and the Secretary‑General as well as Council members. Thank you for having convened this important Conference and I'm also very happy to meet all of the friendly nations here today in order to talk about the ICT sector.

Of course, you will be aware of the problems and the war that Iraq has suffered especially the war taken out by the totalitarian regime characterized by a number of issues and challenges, during wish Iraq has suffered terrorist attacks that have been bloody and has had to fight the entire world. Despite all of this, the development of ICTs is still a priority for the government which is trying to reach the local, international level in this area given the strategic position of Iraq and the shortest route between the areas.

This is an enabling environment for all digital services and ICT services, Iraq has seen progress in terms of its human capacities allowing it to move towards recovery given to its role within the international community you would hope that this international community will support us in its endeavor. That's why Iraq has presented its candidacy for the ITU Council. Iraq is committed to support telecommunications through the following: The consolidation of a robust digital infrastructure with an order to reinforce Digital Transformation in order to bridge the digital divide between developing and developed countries and also given its geographical position, Iraq will allow for data transition between Europe and Asia in order to invest in networks.

Furthermore, complying with the ITU Constitution, putting all of its energy to achieve the ITU objectives in order to develop Telecoms in this country.

Supporting women, in particular promoting them to take up key positions to address the gender parity issue, to promote research and innovation in order to bolster the ICT sector and to implement the resolutions from the PP following the initiatives undertaken by the ITU, particularly pertaining to young people and training.

By way of conclusion, I would ask each and every one of you clearly and candidly to support the candidacy of Iraq to the Council for the reasons above mentioned and to give Iraq an opportunity once again to integrate itself from the international community.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Iraq., the next country invited to take the floor, Namibia, Hon Dr Peya Mushelenga, Minister of Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

>> NAMIBIA: Mr. Chairman, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Heads of Delegation, Distinguished Delegates, allow me to thank the country of Romania, the International Telecommunication Union for hosting the PP‑22 and hospitality extended to us, it is indeed an honor and privilege for me on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Namibia to address you.

Namibia has made significant progress in the development of its ICT infrastructure with 112% mobile penetration, and 74% use of the Internet through various technological platforms and services. Namibia has a population coverage of 96% for 2G, 89% for 3G, and 85% for 4G.

Namibia prioritizes broadband internet connectivity, particularly in the country's most remote areas through the implementation of Universal Services. Last‑mile connectivity will boost rural businesses, reduce the unemployment rate among the youth, and lead to an overall increase in socio‑economic development. Accordingly, the broadband policy set clear targets to be achieved to ensure that broadband is accessible and affordable to all.

To respond to the most pressing agenda of digital transformation and ensure that Namibia embraces the Fourth Industrial Revolution, His Excellency, President Dr Hage G. Geingob, established a Fourth Industrial Revolution Taskforce in July 2021. The Taskforce produced a comprehensive report with recommendations for implementation. Thus, we endeavor to formulate a National Digital Strategy, which will lead to a process of integrating ICT across sectors, with a specific focus on e‑business, e‑learning, e‑health, and e‑governance.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates, the key objectives of digital transformation are digital inclusion, digital infrastructure, digital skills, and digital services. This implies that each citizen should have access to high‑speed broadband services and be equipped with the right skills to utilize such services in a safe digital environment. The digital ecosystem should, above all, incorporate rural areas, women, and the youth.

The provision of ICT services comes with challenges of cybersecurity and increased e–waste. We are in the process of finalizing responsive legal frameworks addressing cybersecurity to ensure safe online services and e‑waste management to minimize the impact of e‑waste on the environment and human health.

Finally, allow me to thank the ITU for their continued support in the area of ICT development through your assistance to develop and review the policies and legislation for ICT in Namibia.

I wish us all success in these important deliberations.

I thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

I invite now Guinea, Mr. Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, Ministre, MinistÃ¨re des Postes, des TÃ©lÃ©communications et de lâ€™Economie NumÃ©rique.

>> GUINEA: Chair, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Ministers, Ambassadors, heads, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor and pleasure from this rostrum to convey my heart held gratitude for the quality and warm welcome my delegation has been afforded. I would also like to convey on my own behalf and that of His Excellency, the President of the Republic, he would like to extend our warm welcome and greetings to you on behalf of the people of Guinea.

I would be remiss if not to pay tribute to Mr. Houlin Zhao who successfully completed his two mandates as Secretary‑General for the ITU for all of the work he's undertaken in the last two years.

I would also like to convey our gratitude to the members of the outgoing Management Team of the organization over the last four years has undertaken remarkable work.

Ladies and gentlemen, like many African countries we have suffered the effects of the COVID‑19 health crisis, this has shown our limitations in terms of connection infrastructure and has reinforced our commitment for the state to reduce the digital divide. Consequently, in order to achieve the strategies of connection for all and lasting Digital Transformation of the ITU which are enshrined in its 2030 Agenda the Republic of Guinea committed to a transformation allowing us to achieve the following. The construction of the backbone of 4400 kilometers of fiberoptic cables to lead to low cost towards more rural and remote areas. The implementation of strategic documents for the education, health and government sector, the implementation of a fiberoptic metropolitan network to implement a data centre, in terms of a vision, I would like to mention the following, digitization national strategy for the state to allow digital access for all citizens all institutions and research institutes of our country will be connected to the internet between now and December 2022, and we would hope to connect 30% of our public schools between now and the end of December, 2023 by seizing the opportunities given to us by the GIGA project.

We're also undertaking studies with a review to reducing costs with access to high speed access service, all of these ambitious projects require Financial and Human Resources as well as quality infrastructures in place in order to achieve this, the Republic of Guinea would like to count on the continued support of the ITU and to show its commitment to this organization, Guinea has decided to increase its contribution unit to ITU between the period of 2024 to 2027 and to increase this to one contributary unit, this is a multiplication of 8 times, 8‑fold increase. I would not like to close without wishing the full success to this Conference and to confirm that the Republic of Guinea will continue to actively participate in the partner to connect initiative ITU as well as building the World Summit Information Society. My country will fully be involved in sharing information within heart of ITU and sharing its experience and providing necessary support in order to lead to the success of Digital Transformation to develop telecommunication network with the view to democratizing internet access for its citizens and combat efficiently against cybercrime, I wish us every success, long live international cooperation. Long live the ITU. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: I give the floor to the Secretary‑General. We have good news!

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Thank you very much. We are excited with this wonderful news to announce that by our Minister for Guinea who has changed their contribution to 1 unit 8 times, that's wonderful news, as I discussed with the Chairman, each time when we get this kind of wonderful new, give me chance to express our sincere appreciation to those members who increased their contributions.

I thank you very much. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Secretary‑General.

Next country, I invite to take the floor Benin, Ms. AurÃ©lie ADAM‑SOULE ZOUMAROU, Ministre, MinistÃ¨re de l'Economie NumÃ©rique et de la Communication.

>> BENIN: Chairman of the Conference, ladies and gentlemen, Minister, Heads of Delegation, Secretary‑General of the ITU, ladies and gentlemen, Directors of the ITU Bureau, ladies and gentlemen: It is with the utmost interest that our delegation is participating in the 21st Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU, and I remain steadfastly convinced that the results of this work will have a lasting impact on the four years ahead, please allow me on behalf of the people and government to convey sincere gratitude to the Government of Romania for the warm welcome and the gracious hospitality which has been shown to us since we arrived thank you, Houlin Zhao, for the excellent work undertaken during the mandate. I congratulate also the members of the Conference Committee for the excellent work and this present Conference of the PP.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ICT and telecommunications are a critical tool in order to accelerate the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It is therefore in this vein that the Government of Benin is working tirelessly to implement the vision of the head of state, His Excellency, the President, pertaining to the digital economy development in Benin through a number of rollout of infrastructures and digital services that are made available to citizens and businesses with digitalization of the public administration sector and all sectors.

Four years ago, I looked at the reform underway, in particular, the adoption of a policy document, widespread investment in fiberoptic, the adoption of a digital code, et cetera.

With all of these projects, rather than just a simple implementation of products and reform, Benin made a conscience choice to implement a Digital Transformation making sense for the people of Benin and for the Beninese companies in the country to make their daily lives in particular in the interactions with the state.

Thus, today, in Benin the people of Benin and the companies in the country and the rest of the world can now access more than 560 public services on‑line which are available 24/7 on the Beninese portal for public services. With the possibility to make requests on‑line, to pay on‑line, and to access documents required on‑line as well.

Thus, Benin is the first country of the countries in the southern index of the EGDI pertaining to on‑line service, complementary platforms for services are also rolled out allowing the state and public structure which will really benefit the people of the country and throughout the world.

A way of example, Benin today with Estonia which are the two leading countries in the world for the ease of setting up on‑line businesses, the students of national exams can consult their result on‑line and the choice, universities can get that on‑line, requests for visa and delivery of the visas, this can be done on‑line. In Benin, the national register of physical persons is currently underway with implications with a view to facilitating the delivery of ID documents.

Moreover, the implementation of a key infrastructure for public services and the rollout of a national data centre, Benin is committed to steadfastly to the development of digital identity whose legal framework is already well established. Because we're very much aware of the digitalization needs environment of trust on the security front, beyond just having a legal framework, Benin is committed to the implementation of tangible actions such as crafting information system protection policies and critical infrastructure protection policies and improving the trust people have in our services.

The quality of our public action has been recognized by the ITU through the global security, Cybersecurity index to which Benin moved from 149th place to the 56th place worldwide and moved from the 33rd ranking to the 6th ranking on the African continent. The results of the implementation of all of the projects and reforms across the digital sector have allowed the people to understand the challenges and the benefits of the digital sphere in their daily lives. With internet penetration rates which has increased from 19.25% in March of 2016 to 69.08% in 2022 the digital sphere today for the people of Benin is a critical service and when it is not available, it is met with frustration. That's why ‑‑ why we should just rest upon our laurels and we continue our investments, and we have also noted with great interest the growth of private investment in the digital sector of Benin.

Over the next few year, Benin will continue to invest and support investments in expanding its coverage and digitalization of the public administration and providing quality services and digitalization of companies and businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would kindly ask you to consult the following website, Beninese and here you will see the achievements and the hopes of Benin which are in full alignment with the Connect 2020 initiative which shows the commitment of ITU to connect the world, and in particular the African continent.

Benin is very much grateful to the ITU for all its support in this area. That is why convinced of the success of the ITU strategy to overcome the challenges of connectivity throughout the world and particularly for Developing Countries, Benin would like to once again stress its determination to continue to support and participate in the work of ITU over the upcoming cycle across the different sectors such as development of telecommunication, standardization sector and, of course, the Radiocommunication Sector. Collaboration between Benin and ITU will step up over the next few years.

I would also like to convey my full support to the President and Chair of this Conference and wish him every success.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Benin. I invite, your Excellency, you have the floor.

Solomon Islands, Mr. Ped Shanel Agovaka, Honourable Ministry of Communication and Aviation.

>> SOLOMON ISLANDS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honorable Minister, Secretary‑General, Chairman, Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chair, I stand here on behalf of the government and the people of salmon islands and bring warm welcomes to all Member States presented here at the ITU Plenipotentiary meeting, 2022. I congratulate the government and the people of Romania for being a wonderful host to this event, a wonderful event and at a trying time. Since the pandemic, the world has become a different place for all nations and Solomon Islands is no exception. 80% of our population live in rural areas. There is a fixed broadband penetration of less than .2%.

In addition to the process of connecting our remote and isolated islands our challenges include implementing our national policy, improving regulatory and legislative frameworks, expanding and improving digital government and digital economy and digital society.

I call on ITU and our partners to support Solomon Islands in our transformation and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including gender balance in ICT, people with Special Needs and Climate Change mechanisms. ICT is by and large a critical vehicle in our development.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, Solomon Islands continues to implement the national ICT policy, institutional strengthening and the capacity building. Mr. Chairman, I wish to make this report.

In 2020 Solomon Islands deployed the first fiberoptic submarine cable system connecting Australia to Solomon Islands and our constraints went from 3 to 6 gigabytes a second and allowing potential capacity of 20,000 gigabytes. In 2021 we introduced the system on the fiberoptic submarine cable giving wholesale customers the option of volume pricing, charging for traffic instead of bandwidth. As a result, a broader measure of the retail cost of the data source saw a 40% decline in prices from 2020 to 2022.

In 2022, Mr. Chairman, we will be able to finalize the Solomon Islands national broadband infrastructure project with an investment of U.S. dollars, 70 million into the construction of 161 broadband areas. This investment increases the mobile coverage from 54% to 94% and internet penetration from 30% to 80% in five year, increasing rural access to ICT services and products as well as enabling the service delivery in education, agriculture, health, digital finance, early warning response, capacity in Solomon Islands. Mr. Chairman, I wish to acknowledge the support of ITU, the Solomon Islands especially the development and implementation of the national emergency telecommunication plan and the national Cybersecurity policy and hopefully in the future the smart islands program and we intend to increase our attendance through the ITU technical training.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I wish to submit that the Solomon Islands is always mindful of our context as a small island developing nation and a least developing country. And as much has been said about the last mile and connecting the unconnected, the region, our Pacific, it is the least connected and certainly the last mile in so far as ITU is concerned.

It is, therefore, my humble submission that in becoming leaders of the ITU that greater and meaningful and tangible attention and cooperation be accorded to our region.

It is true we're indeed only as strong as our weakest link. Our endeavor as a nation, as a region is to ensure that our link with ITU is stronger through strengthening relationships, meaningful partnerships and enhancing collaborative efforts.

Mr. Chairman, with these few remarks, I restrengthen the sentiments echoed by other ministries in this Plenary and sincerely congratulate the ITU for a successful event and I wish to thank our outgoing Secretary‑General and Deputy Secretary‑General and the offices for the hard work you have made over the four years and in the achievement over the last four years.

I bid you all success in your future endeavors and I thank you one and all.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Solomon Islands.

I invite the representative of Botswana, Mr. Thulagano Merafe Segokgo , Minister, Ministry of Communications, Knowledge and Technology.

Excellency, you have the floor.

>> BOTSWANA: Thank you, Chairman, Excellency, heads of government, Minister, distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Chairman. Allow me to observe protocol as already established by Distinguished Delegates who spoke before me and convey warm greetings from the government and the people of the Republic of Botswana.

The Delegation of Republic of Botswana to the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference conveys its hearty gratitude to the government and the people of the Republic of Romania for the warm reception we have been accorded since our arrival in the historic City of Bucharest. We wish to add our voice to many who congratulated you on your appointment as Chairman of the Plenipotentiary Conference. Coming in the aftermath of COVID‑19, this Conference looks up to your stewardship to realize the outcomes that the world eagerly awaits, we have all of the confidence that you will meticulously guide the Conference through its loaded three weeks agenda.

Botswana pledges her unfettered support.

Chairman, Botswana is a landlocked country with a territory measuring 581,730 square kilometers, a population of just over it.3 million people and population density of 4.1 people per square kilometer. Being landlocked with a sparse population brings about many challenges to the development of the communications sector. Therefore, the theme of the Conference connect and unite offers hope for our plight.

Notwithstanding the challenge I just articulated, Botswana is making progress in line with the objectives of the ITU regarding universal connectivity and sustainable Digital Transformation, at policy level Botswana has put in place ICT supportive legislative instruments including the Communications Regulatory Authority Act, 2012 ; Cybercrime and Computer Related Crimes Act, 2018 ; Electronic Records Act, 2014 ; Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2014 ; and Data Protection Act, 2018. In 2021 government put in place the National Cybersecurity Strategy which has among others the objective to enhance collaboration and cooperation on Cybersecurity issues at national, regional and international level. In the implementing the National Cybersecurity Strategy Botswana worked with the ITU to establish the communications sector computer incident response team, currently the country is in the processes of establishing a national CIRT.

Botswana is pursuing a Digital Transformation and mindset change agenda which has the objective to engender and mainstream ICTs across all sectors of the economy. Driven by His Excellency, the President Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, the Digital Transformation agenda leverages on initiatives such as smart Botswana and the universal access and service fund to achieve country wide meaningful universal broadband connectivity. Smart Botswana initiates mobilizes all required resources to ensure connectivity of all public sector establishments and defines desirable standards to ensure quality connectivity. To this end, government aims at modernizing delivery of public services to the citizenry before 2025. Of paramount is the importance to graduate from the middle‑ to high‑income status through the development of the ICT infrastructure to support the digital economy. Efforts to connect all public schools to the internet and provide ICT gadgets to students are progressing in earnest.

Similarly, ICT connectivity is targeted at all public institutions including health facilities and tribal administrations, civic centres country wide, particularly in the rural areas. The program in place is to connect more than 500 villages to high‑speed networks by 2024.

These initiatives are baring fruits as Botswana boasts of the highest mobile penetration rates in the developing world. The mobile subscription reached 210% tele density as of March, 2022 with an equally impressive mobile broadband penetration in access of 2.4 million subscribers as of March, 2022.

LTE coverage covers 89% of the population.

At the rate at which we're going, I'm confident that Botswana will achieve meaningful, universal connectivity by 2024 as pledged during partner 2 connect roundtable digital coalition discussions held during the World Telecommunications Development Conference held in Kigali, Rwanda this year.

Chairman, our notable progress is not without challenges. We are challenged when it comes to availability of relevant local content.

Cybercrime threatens to negate the digitalization drive that as a country we are pursuing. We are experiencing daily threats aimed at our national critical infrastructure, some of which are successful.

Global ICT price increases and limited supply of ICT equipment occasioned by the advent of COVID‑19 have affected the pace at which our digitalization trajectory was intended to progress transit costs from undersea cable systems landing stations are, for U a reality that we can never forget to highlight.

We are, therefore, looking forward to this Conference where, as a collective or through bilateral engagements with individual members, we hope to find possible solutions to some of these challenges. We thank you for the opportunity to share our efforts in the quest to achieving meaningful connectivity for our people and the world at large.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Botswana. I ask you to stay within the 3 minutes allocated, we have a list of Ministers from other countries that are going to deliver their general policy statements today.

Thank you very much for this.

The next country I invite to take the floor is Yemen, represented by Dr. Mr. Najeeb El‑oj, Minister, Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology.

Please, Your Excellency.

>> YEMEN: Good afternoon, everyone. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, delegates, Heads of Delegation:

At the outset, I would like to thank the people in government ‑‑ and Government of Romania for the warm welcome that they have given us as well as to thank them for the organization of this important Conference and we would like to thank ITU for all of the efforts that have been made, we're so happy to be here in this wonderful City of Bucharest.

Following on, Yemen has made many efforts in order to develop ICTs, however unfortunately those efforts have been blocked and the ICT sector has only suffered from it, Yemen actively participated in all international bodies as well as ITU activities and for a number of years, because of the war, all of those activities ceased. Now and several years now, we have relaunched activities and we have participated once again in the ITU as well as within relevant regional organizations and today we are here having participated in Rwanda and the events that were held this summer. It was for the first time following an interruption of more than 7 years following a precarious internal situation in many crisis that enveloped our country, those crisis damaged our ICT infrastructure and as well as our Telecom sector, serious damage was done as a result and today we're trying to improve the performance of that infrastructure and of our networks.

We would like to encourage the private sector to redouble their efforts in order to ensure that this sector can recover. We have more than 30 million inhabitants in Yemen and currently we have coverage to almost 20 million people when it comes to Telecoms and ICTs, over the last few years the government has tried to envision a recovery for this sector and we have encouraged the public and private sectors as well as our global partners to invest in mobile networks and we have established a national company for 4G technology. We also are striving to improve necessary services for citizens as well as sustaining businesses who are in charge of the digital sphere and we are attempting to expand our fiberoptic network and to improve access to it for schools, universities and certain NGOs.

Today we would like to highlight the importance of attracting investment and to support the development of infrastructure and the Telecom sector as a whole.

In Yemen, we as spire to be able to provide support to the ITU and to all member countries, strengthening capacities and confidences to guarantee the development of technologies in this area. Yemen will continue to be an active participant in ITU and through the efforts of our Ministry of Telecommunications we will be attempting to create a conducive environment to implement ITU recommendations.

Our government is also striving to establish partnerships with friendly and brotherly nations in order to create a healthy conducive environment for the sector and also to create a foundation for a good use of ICTs.

We also hope to see reduction in the digital divide for the interest of developing countries when it comes to health and education in particular and in all other sectors as well.

We have full confidence in ITU and the role it plays in developing Telecom throughout the world without discrimination and without demonstrating partiality. We do hope that developing countries will receive the assistance that they require for achieving the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Yemen.

I invite Niger, Moussa Hassane Baraze, Ministre MinistÃ¨re de la Poste et des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information.

>> NIGER: Thank you very much, Chair.

Chair, Ministers, Heads of nations, Heads of Delegation, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Directors of the ITU Bureau, dear participants, members of the press, dear guests, ladies and gentlemen, at the outset on behalf of my government, my country's delegation, I wish to extend our sincere thanks to the government and people of Rwanda on behalf of our President, and we would like to thank them for the warm welcome and all of the arrangements made available to us to grant such a pleasant stay in this wonderful City of Bucharest. We thank them for having organized this meeting, gathering us together today.

Distinguished guests, my presence here at this Conference shows the determination of my government to make ITCs and related technologies a way to fight against poverty. It demonstrates our strong commitment to participate in developing the ITU. Indeed, the ITU's objective to make ICTs an accelerator for growth and for socioeconomic and sustainable environmentally Sustainable Development, it is something that's completely envisioned by our President who has committed himself to ensuring that the Digital Transformation of our country will become a reality as we're an emerging country.

This is why my ministry and my department has allocated great resources to this ensuring that in Niger we have a conducive environment for attracting environment and related activities. We would also be providing ourself was a stable, coherent regulatory framework in order to accompany this. Niger in the next upcoming day also be adopting a plan for Cybersecurity amongst other plans, this will allow the operators on a digital ecosystem to adapt to the rapid changes of the telecommunications and ICT sector and bolster confidence and security in the use of ICTs. We currently have an arsenal of regulatory and legal texts on cybercrime and with relating to data protection. We have ratified the Convention on Cybersecurity and the Budapest Convention on cybercrime.

Ladies and gentlemen, Excellency, our government has initiated several programmes and projects in order to accelerate the Digital Transformation of our society. This has allowed us to continuously improve the digital sphere, we have 15 million mobile subscribers out of 25 million population, more than 8 million are connected to the internet and we have a mobile penetration rate of over 30%. We have kilometers of fiberoptics linking together major towns and we also connected with other areas and our 7 neighbors, significantly contributing to allowing us to have integrated sustained development. We're developing the work as part of the Sub‑Saharan backbone project in addition to that and our country has undertaken measures and initiatives in order to protect the disadvantaged and marginalized, and we will be launching a program to connect 250,000 villages and towns. Despite the progress we have made, we still have many challenges to tackle, in particular when it comes to infrastructure which is a crucial pillar to ensure a sustained, inclusive Digital Transformation.

Our territory is vast, almost 2 million square kilometers, and we have many different challenges, in particular when it comes to security. 30% of our budget has to go towards tackling the challenges, as you know, without security, there was no development.

At this time, I would like to pay tribute to our dear President of the Republic, for all of the efforts that he has tirelessly made in order to ensure that peace and security reign in our country and in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali as a region, I ask you to support Niger and all countries that face difficult situations as they envisage this Digital Transformation.

We have great hopes in the ITU as to the outcomes of our work. It will determine the future of our organization for the four upcoming years. It will act to the benefit of our economies and peoples, allowing for increased use of ICTs, Niger decided to increase the involvement of the organization by presenting its candidacy to the ITU Council for Region D. I would, therefore, like to request the support of all of you so that Niger can for the first time take up a place on our Council.

I would also like to inform you that Niger is organizing the first digital week in December and you are all cordially invited to that major event. I would like to wish every success to our Conference and I thank you for the kind attention.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Niger.

The next country I invite to take the floor is Philippines, Mr. Ivan John Uydict, Secretary The Department of Information and Communications Technology.

>> PHILLIPINES: Honorable Secretary‑General, Deputy Secretary‑General, officials of ITU, Excellencies, Heads of Delegation, distinguished guests, please accept the warmest regards and greetings from the Philippines. We're greatly honored to join the telecommunications and government leaders of the world assembled here today in this marvelous City of Bucharest.

The Philippines thanks the Government of Romania for the splendid hosting of this year's Plenipotentiary. Our membership in the ITU for more than a century reflects our strong commitment to its common goals and aspirations. And to obtain this, we need to continue to work hard together. Six years ago through a dedicated department for Information and Communications technology, with attached agencies for Cybersecurity, telecommunications, data privacy, the Philippines has fully embraced digitalization as both a clear policy direction and a strategic goal towards a sustainable Digital Transformation. Our investments in digital infrastructure and connectivity composed of 90% of the total department budget to ensure that every island of over 7,000 islands are connected to the rest of the world. Already close to 4 million in Philippines including our school children enjoy free wi‑fi in more than 4,000 schools and public places across the country, and mostly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities. Our target in the next 15 months is to activate close to 10,000 sites to serve more than 10 million Filipinos.

The Philippine national broadband program which is now over 70% complete with its fiber backbone is targeted to be completed in May of 2023 and connecting almost 1,000 national and local government agencies. We steadily improve our ranking from 63 to 57 for our fixed broadband and from 73 to 62 for the mobile internet speed. The country's digital future is now anchored on an agile bureaucracy with the marching orders of our new President allowing our laws and programmes for eGovernment systems and overall digital governance should benefit our young nation with an average age of 24 years old and these are tech savvy citizens.

Through our governance project, we target to digitalize and improve the interoperability, the security, the data‑driven capacity of all our 81 provinces, our 147 cities, and the 1488 municipalities to ensure that government services are citizen‑centric.

The Philippines also recognizes the value of digital data and has worked relentlessly with the ITU and other Member States in laying the foundations for ICT statistics in the country. This led to the successful conduct of the first ever national ICT household survey in 2019 as well as 2022 to ensure data driven policy positions.

Clear programmes, national policies for massive digital upskilling are now in place to future proof our workforce. The greatest resource, to ably serve the world's complex digital services to ensure Cybersecurity and promote start‑up innovations. Our target is to train 5 million Filipinos through on‑line courses in basic and advanced digital skills, including the emerging technologies to complement the target of 3 million digital jobs by 2026.

Doubling the current numbers for business and knowledge process management and increasing the current 4 million number of Filipinos in what we call the gig economy.

Our digital cities program has become an excellent template for developing tier 2 and tier 3 cities into mature locations for digital services. We wish to share our experts with ITU Member States aiming to generate digital jobs especially for your countryside population.

In close, I earnestly seek your support for the Philippines candidature for the ITU Council for 2022 to 2026. The Philippines looks forward to sharing the success stories of our citizen experts to Member States in the spirit of collaboration and partnership. These citizens are our frontliners and groundworkers who not only speak but live and embody the human face of technology and connectivity.

In support of the Bucharest declaration, the Philippines will work closely with ITU and all its Member States to achieve a better digital future for all of us.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Philippines.

I now invite Somalia, Mr. Jama Hassan Khalif, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology.

>> SOMALIA: In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful, the ITU Member States, leadership, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I am honored to be here with you today. I also would like to recognize Romania government for the warm welcome and hospitality they gave us and we commend the decision to bring everyone to the City of Bucharest.

Somalia is not running for a seat this term, however we're confident that we will be well presented by other Member States in ITU. So also let me remind you our friends here today, Somalia welcomes any within the organization, although we're not running, to succeed in Digital Transformation and connectivity, for all, the ITU organization should support the safety net for most least developed countries. With that, I would like to bring the attention to you today Resolution  160 adopted during the 2018 ITU Conference in Dubai based on the ITU Union should support Somalia, we would like that to be implemented, see that implemented. Somalia is a strategic location and presents a great opportunity for the organization of its own digital agenda to connect the unconnected.

My government has implemented a strategy and priorities by implementing an eGovernment policy and strategy for improving affordability and to have inclusive, the opportunities, the digital skills, among them, literacy, a framework of law, policies, regulation and the development in this digital economy with first mile connectivity and minimized connectivity, it is also established. The establishment of a national data centre on relevant data protection Cybersecurity capabilities.

In conclusion, we fully support the Bucharest declaration to build a better digital future for all and we also urge others to do the same. Sew pal I can't is a digitally freeing country and open for business. I would like to also add I heard from this podium today, we're calling you, ITU members, we have this ability in Africa. And with that, I would like to conclude my words by saying thank you very much and have a good afternoon.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Somalia.

The next country I'm inviting to take the floor is Nigeria.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> NIGERIA: Chairman of the session, Mr. Sarmas, the SG of ITU, Director here that is present, global ICT and digital economy Minister, Heads of government delegations, all other protocol dually and respectfully observed, good afternoon to all of you and may it peace, mercy, his blessings be upon you.

On behalf of the President of Nigeria and also our citizens I use this opportunity to convey appreciation and good will to the government and people of Romania for the warm and hospitable reception we have accorded with since the time of our arrival.

Furthermore, I also want to use the opportunity to comment the International Telecommunication Union leadership, thank you for the role that they have been playing in the development of telecommunications globally, particularly the digital economy sector in general. The effort of ITU is highly commendable.

In addition, our story in Nigeria, particularly the success story is summarized within ‑‑ cannot be summarized in 3 minutes but I have figured out to you to share some of the major achievements to show the gist of our achievements. As it is today in Nigeria, the digital economy sector, it is the fastest growing sector of our economy. Particularly, at the peak of COVID‑19 recession, the pandemic, it was the only sector that grew by double digits. Furthermore, what facilitated these achievements, it is summarized as follows, that's the development of 19 national policies that are all implemented today, and these national policies are in the area of the developmental regulations, infrastructure, digital skills, indigenous content development, among many others. It is because of this, the development of the policies and the implementation that the digital economy sector played the principle role of lifting out Nigeria out of recession into the last quarter of 2020 that was triggered by coronavirus pandemic.

Furthermore, the sector has recorded many unprecedented achievements when it comes to contribution of the Gross Domestic Product. For example, in the first quarter of 2020, the sector country voted more than 14% to our GDP, and in the second quarter of 2021 the sector also contributed 17.92% to our GDP, it was also unprecedented.

In the second wart quarter of 2022, the sector contributed 18.4% to our GDP which is also unprecedented.

As it is today, in Nigeria, in Africa, we have around 7 unicorns and many have the roots in Nigeria, meaning that they originate from Nigeria by implication that Nigeria alone contributed almost 70% to the entire Africa with 44 countries. When it comes to digital skills, we have the extent of the recession, we have established two virtual academies, where we trained our citizens on emerging technologies. We train around 2.5 million citizens and we signed ‑‑ we have planned to train more than 10 million citizens in the next two or three years.

And we are in the process of Nigeria law, providing the enabling environment for our young innovators to come up with solutions to our global problem, particularly the complex problems we have globally.

A lot has been achieved in Nigeria, there is no doubt. However, on behalf of the good people of Nigeria, I want to use the opportunity also to make some recommendations to the global digital economy leaders that converge here in this beautiful and historic City of Bucharest.

Firstly, it is very important, we should try to promote Cybersecurity. As we all know today, we have over 5 million people on‑line, 5 billion people on‑line, so the rate of cybercrime is increasing by the day. There is a need for prioritizing Cybersecurity and more specifically cyber immunity, to make sure that our cyberspace is being useful in the economic development, socialization, promoting security, peace and stability and used in committing crime.

Secondly, in the 4th industrial revolution, we know that we have another world besides the physical and the virtual world, we have another ‑‑ besides the physical and the biological world, we have another virtual world, so we have three worlds together. The virtual world which has been brought about by the fourth industrial revolution, particularly in the development of the artificial intelligence, robotic, Internet of Things, among many other, there is a need for us to promote that whatever is legal and legitimate offline, it is legal and legitimate on‑line. And whatever is illegal and I will legitimate on‑line, it should be illegal and I will legitimate on‑line.

Why? Because the virtual world is an extension of our biological and also our physical world.

Thirdly, there is a need to promote ethic, the fourth revolution, it is a reality, no doubt about this. It is because of this we need to promote ethics particularly in dealing with artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, robotics, many more. That's what brought about the data protection regulation to be in place. In Nigeria, we have established a full-fledged agency of government which has been named as Nigeria data protection in order to ensure at least we enforce ethic, privacy and impartiality.

Finally, as Chairman of WSIS 2022, I want to use the opportunity to encourage global digital economy leaders to prioritize the activities of WSIS as they are in alignment with what has been presented here since morning up to this period.

Thank you very much for opportunity to address you. I wish all the best.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

I have the pleasure now to invite to take the floor Sweden, represented by Mr. Dan Sjã‑Blom, Director‑General, Swedish Post and Telecom Authority.

>> SWEDEN: Excellencies, Mr. Secretary General, Mr. President, Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, Delegates:

First, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government of Sweden, I would like to thank the Government of Romania and the International Telecommunication Union for preparing this Conference. Not only the excellent organization but also the warm hospitality of Romania greatly contributes to our common efforts of having a successful plenipotentiary conference.

The importance of digitalization is growing. Today it is a prerequisite for being able to interact in society today.

Today we have challenges not only of building connectivity but maintaining it. We feel strongly for Ukraine which is suffering daily cyberattacks and whose telecommunications sector is under enormous pressure. On behalf of Sweden, I would like to express our full solidarity with Ukraine.

Sweden is convinced that the global digital divide must be bridged to realize the full potential of digital transformation. This is an important step towards global equality. A strong and active ITU is vital to addressing these challenges together. Sweden already contributes to this work in several areas, and now we wish to do so within the Council.

We are dedicated to continuing to contribute to an increased focus within ITU on connectivity, digital skills, transparent, equitable and effective governance, flexibility and effective use of radio spectrum.

The global digital divide must be bridged in order to realize the full potential of digital transformation. It is an important step towards global equality and cohesion, benefitting everybody.

Over the past six years, Sweden has via our regulator PTS and SPIDER, a project with Stockholm University, contributed to capacity‑building, peer‑to‑peer projects, with more than 30 countries in Africa. The project ‑ with its resources from PTS ‑ has been supporting regulators in developing and implementing their own individual strategic targets, but at the same time engaging in discussions on joint challenges. We are currently working on scaling up this programme to have a broader outreach.

A strong and active ITU is vital to addressing these challenges together, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital world.

Sweden is highly committed to a continued engagement in ITU. Sweden has been successful in strengthening connectivity on the national, regional, and international level and now we wish to bring this knowledge to the ITU‑Council.

We look forward to work with all of you to bring have successful outcomes of this conference

I thank you.

Multumesc, to our Romania host. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Sweden.

Thank you to all of the Ministers and Excellencies who have spoken so far who presented their statements. We'll take now a 25‑minute break, it is a coffee break offered by Switzerland. Does Switzerland wanted to take the floor? You're invited? If not, we'll meet here in 25 minutes, as I said, at 40 past 4:00. 40 minutes past 4:00.

In 25 minutes to continue with the general policy statements.

Thank you very much.

(Break).

>> CHAIR: Distinguished Delegates, can you please take your seats so we can start the meeting? Thank you.

Welcome to the last session of the day, general policy statements.

I welcome to the floor, South Sudan, Mr. Jacob Korok Maiju, Deputy Minister, Ministry if ICT and Postal Services Ministry of ICT and Postal Services.

Your Excellency, you have the floor.

>> SOUTH SUDAN: ITU Secretary‑General, elected officials, Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, heads of delegations, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, allow me to start by congratulating you on the noble role you have been entrusted with to Chair this Conference which is the highest position within the Union.

On behalf of the government and people of South Sudan, I would like to extend our appreciation to the government and the people of the Republic of Romania for the great hospitality accorded to our delegation and for working together with the ITU secretariat to organize this marvelous conference in this beautiful city of Bucharest.

Following South Sudan’s independence in 2011, Telecommunications and ICT became our immediate challenge as we inherited one of the least connected territories and populations in the world. In tackling this challenge, we sought support and collaboration from our very sisterly neighboring countries in the East African region and from resourceful regional and international organizations such as the African Telecommunications Union, the ITU, among others. These external engagements have given us tremendous exposure that have greatly enhanced our technical capacity and shaped our national ICT policy and regulatory approaches.

This is our 3rd participation in ITU PP and we remain grateful to the ITU membership for welcoming us and for sharing with us their experiences in developing the sector. During the last Plenipotentiary conference, South Sudan was still struggling to rollout basic telephony services on 3G. I am pleased to report to this conference that we have since made good progress.

South Sudan have deployed 4G services in all major urban centers thanks to the arrival of our first fiber in 2020. We also remain grateful to our neighbors Kenya and Uganda through whom we have access to the sea cable. This experience shows that the theme of this conference “Connecting to unite” is already at work in our sub‑region.

South Sudan has just commissioned its 1st Internet Exchange Point in an effort to improve the internet user experience in the country as well as promoting local content.

The government through the Universal Service Access Fund has continued deployment of infrastructure to facilitate rural connectivity as well as emphasizing the adoption of Open Radio Access Network by Operators while encouraging the use of Satellite terminals to provide services in remote and hard to reach areas.

This program is in line with our commitment at the recent WTDC‑22 concluded in Kigali where South Sudan pledged 60 million dollars towards the connectivity agenda.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen:

South Sudan is geographically positioned in the heart of Africa making it the ultimate crossroad for interconnecting East to West and North to South. Currently, most connections on the African continent tend to follow the coastlines and inland Africa with a large portion of the population left with no connectivity.

In line with the theme of this conference, South Sudan will play a vital role in using connectivity for strengthening unity in our region through our vision of extending broadband infrastructure within in‑land Africa.

South Sudan intends to leverage its geographic location to serve as a connectivity hub by deploying multiple fiber backbones to access the red sea through Sudan, and the Indian Ocean through Djibouti via Ethiopia and through Kenya.

This program will provide sufficient redundancy not only for South Sudan but our immediate neighbors to whom we will provide alternative connectivity routes linking to the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and the Red Sea marine cables.

This will be accomplished through meaningful partnerships and the creation of attractive investment environment through good policies and regulations. South Sudan pledges to remain a committed member of the ITU as we look forward to the more cooperation with the ITU and its membership.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, South Sudan.

I invite now Libya.

>> LIBYA: Thank you. Secretary‑General, Chairman, of the Conference, ladies and gentlemen, Ministers, Heads of State, at the outset on behalf of Libya, we would like to convey our gratitude to Romania for its excellent and gracious hospitality shown on behalf of Libya.

I would like to convey our gratitude to ITU for Resolution  83 from Buenos Aires to support Libya. Through ITU Libya aims to make progress in the areas of ICTs through the telecommunication networks and through the mobile telephone networks which cover the whole country with high‑speed networks.

Libya also has a telecommunication network of fiberoptic which is 16,000 kilometer, the national strategy for telecommunications for 2023/2028 which will be declared soon before the end of this year.

Recently, we have put in the foundations to develop the ICTs with the drawing up of legislation and regulation fit for the ICT network. Libya has also adopted a number of regulation and policies pertaining to the regulation of ICTs, pertaining to Cybersecurity, through the national strategy we will try to ensure this and through the digital group we have set up a Committee for the Digital Transformation whose mandate encompasses the adoption of criteria and norms, roadmap for additional work as we set up the priorities to achieve this objective.

Moreover, we also drafted a partnership between the public and private sectors allowing for a number of private copyrights to work with the government with the implementation of projects, moreover, we have strategic projects which we will try to implement through projects to link the different parts of Africa and the world through the Libyan territory. Moreover, we also are seeking to develop initiatives through the Libyan academy on ICTs, this is, for example, having an academy to develop skills and we also will work with ITU according to the ITU Constitution I thank you and convey all of my greetings from my own country.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Libya.

I now invite Singapore to take the floor,

Mr. Ian MaK, Assistant Chief Executive, International Infocomm Media Development Authority.

>> SINGAPORE: Honourable Heads of States and Ministers, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Excellencies:

1On behalf of the Singapore delegation, I would like to express our deep appreciation to our host Romania for the great hospitality and excellent organization of this Conference, as well as to the Chair and the ITU Secretariat for the exceptional management of the conference proceedings.

Our global recovery is a fragile and there is an urgent need for us to work together to support the 2.9 billion worldwide who remain unconnected.

4In Singapore, two key principles have guided us in our approach to harnessing digitalization for recovery and inclusive growth, and ultimately in strengthening trust.

5First, this is a Whole‑of‑Society effort. Governments cannot do this alone, nor do we have all the answers. We need to work together with the industry, civil society, and international organizations like the ITU. .

Second, it is important to focus on both the hardware and the software –

In addition to putting in place communications infrastructure for universal and affordable access, it is also equally critical to take practical, tangible actions to equip our citizens and businesses with the skills and tools to use digital technologies meaningfully, safely, and confidently.

6For example, in Singapore, we launched a Digital for Life Movement last year to mobilize partners comprising the industry, community organizations and government agencies to drive a Whole‑of‑Society effort to build a digitally ready and inclusive society. More than 100 partners have pledged support, both in enhancing access to the ‘hardware’ – like affordable internet connections and mobile devices, and in building up the ‘software’ – promoting digital skills and wellness among our youth and more vulnerable groups in society in including the elderly and Persons with Disabilities.

7At the global level, Singapore as a small state believes strongly in the power of multilateral cooperation, to build trust and to harness the opportunities of the digital revolution. Singapore has been developing and offering capacity‑building programmes, in partnership with international organizations and industry, in areas such as digital transformation, data governance, and digital trade.

To reaffirm Singapore’s commitment to supporting inclusive global growth and to bridging the digital divide, we will be announcing in the coming month plans to deepen our international collaboration with key partners, like the ITU, to develop more capacity building programmes, particularly with fellow small states. We believe in the value of learning from one another’s experience, and in contributing collectively to the ITU’s Connect 2030 Agenda and the UN Global Digital Compact, to tackle today’s challenges, and to put in place a stronger foundation for our future.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Singapore.

I invite Israel to take the floor, Ms. Naama Henig, Director of External Affairs Division, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

>> ISRAEL: It is my honor to be here in Bucharest for the 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference on behalf of the delegation, I would like to thank the ITU under the outstanding leadership of Secretary‑General Houlin Zhao and the Government of Romania for the enormous efforts and wonderful hospitality.

The decisions we take in this Conference will shape the work of the Union and set us in the direction of the Digital Transformation for years to come. Our actions today will make tremendous impacts on our societies and economies.

We are experiencing rapid technological changes with every aspect of our lives.

In the past two year, the COVID‑19 pandemic highlighted the importance of connectivity and the access to secure and reliable networks for everyone everywhere.

The State of Israel shows the vision for an Information Society where telecommunication technologies supports socioeconomic and sustainable growth and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 global agenda.

In support of this vision, we have created key priorities for bringing the digital divide and promoting the economic growth and sustainable Digital Transformation. Since the last PP, Israel went through tremendous development with the telecommunications and the ITC sector and active 5G network was launched in 2021 with the rapidly growing number of new subscribers. We are also investing in creating an environment for 5G innovation by implementing a program for supporting the development of applications and services in 5G which is becoming the significant growth engine for frontier technologies from the entire Israeli economy.

In addition, the telecommunications law and the framework in Israel was amended in order to adapt an emerging technology ‑‑ to emerging technologies. This Amendments allow us to strengthen competition, reduce regulatory barriers and open the market to new stakeholders.

One of our top priorities is ensuring reliable and affordable broadband access in rural areas, including small villages and minority communities. I'm proud to say that Israel is on track to deliver fiberoptic networks to every home and business by 2027 by using an incentive outlined and Universal Fund to encouraging the deployment of this network in rural areas as a result the rate of access to fiberoptic network has increased rapidly reaching roughly 60% of households.

Digital skills and tools are another priority for us. These are essential in today's and tomorrow's world. It is becoming increasingly difficult to participate effectively in the economy and society and the labor force without digital skills. To this end, the Ministry of Communication, together with the Civil Society are investing and developing a variety of training programmes designed especially for vulnerable groups in society, including older persons and Persons with Disabilities among others, especially the priority areas. The State of Israel is also investing resources in sharing data expertise with the international community, the Israel development agency. It operated various programmes with the development and empowering individuals and communities through digital platforms.

We continue this important work, even during the global pandemic, using existing digital connectivity. In recent months, we have utilized the digital platforms to provide support and knowledge especially the health practices, including mental health to professionals in Ukraine.

Chairman, we see great importance in improving the Palestinian economic situation, including the development of the communication sector. It is our mutual interest and we all want to see progress made. In the past few months we held several joint technical Committee meetings and we continue to hold bilateral talks with the Ministry of communications of the Palestinian authority in order to implement the 4G, 5G networks in the Palestinian territories.

Finally, I wish all of us productive discussions on the important issues on our agenda that will contribute to the future architecture of the ICT world. Now more than ever we need a strong and efficient Union. Israel stands ready to work with all of you for the success of this Plenipotentiary. We were celebrating in the last few days as the Secretary‑General mentioned in the Opening Plenary the Jewish new year. Let me share with you our good wishes and wish you all a very happy, healthy and fruitful year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Israel.

Thank you also for your very nice and meaningful words.

I invite now Georgia to take the floor. Headed by Ms. Eka Kubusidze, Head of Communications, Information and Modern Technologies Department of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia.

Please, you have the floor.

>> GEORGIA: Dear Mr. Chairman, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Excellencies, ITU family:

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure and honor to be here, on Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU and on behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Romania for the warm welcome and for the excellent organization of this important Conference.

As a matter of fact, we are living in a digital world and information era, where the access to the internet becomes the inseparable part of our every day’s life, the right to access the internet is guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia. The internet is recognized as one of the most powerful instruments for accessing information and facilitating active citizen participation in building a democratic society.

Bridging the digital divide is one of the main challenges worldwide. In recent years Georgia took active steps to accelerate the development of Digital Economy and Information Society in the country. The Government of Georgia has conducted successful reforms to develop a knowledge‑based and an innovation‑driven economy.

In order to maintain and increase the pace of development of the digital economy and information society in Georgia, the “National Broadband Development Strategy of Georgia and its Implementation Action Plan for 2020‑2025” was adopted by the Government of Georgia.

The key objectives of the NBDS are fully in line with the EU’s Gigabit Society objectives for 2025 and are oriented to: Increase Competitive Pressure, Attract Investments; Build Digital Skills & Demand. To host a regional digital hub in Georgia is one of our strategical priorities as well.

All above activates will contribute to achieve the strategic goals of ITU such as the Universal Connectivity and Sustainable Digital Transformation etc.

Ladies and gentlemen, last but not least, I’d like to draw your attention to the regretful fact that the Government of Georgia is deprived of the possibility to exercise its de facto jurisdiction over the entire territory of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, among them in the sector of telecommunication and information technology, as a result of continuous military aggression against Georgia and the illegal occupation of Georgia’s indivisible regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation, which further continues in blatant violation of the fundamental principles and norms of international law, Helsinki Final Act, the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolutions.

Any action with or/and in the illegally occupied regions of Georgia in the sector of telecommunication and information technology can be carried out only in full respect for the Constitution and Legislation of Georgia, the acts of International Telecommunication Union and the fundamental principles and norms of international law. All other cases represent illegal action and violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

The international community must stand together and stand strong in support of the principle of sovereign equality of states and the inviolability of their internationally recognized borders, Georgia follows to basic principles of the ITU Convention, Constitution and Regulations and is ready to cooperate with ITU and its Member States for the development of ICTs to the relevant level.

In conclusion, I would like to thank entire ITU team for this perfect work performed. I wish you all success on your further activates.

Thank you for your attention. I wish all of you success in your other activities.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Georgia.

I would like to thank all of the Ministers and Excellencies who came here to Romania and to give us such great policy statements that's full of hope to see so many countries side by side, advocating for a better future through technology.

Congratulations for doing what you're doing in your countries. Congratulations on being so open with international cooperation and partnership and thank you for supporting ITU.

I think we started great! We had three very good days so far! I would like to say we'll continue the same in the next days we have.

Before that, I would like to remind you that tomorrow we are starting the elections. Tomorrow morning, 29th of September at 9:30 in the Plenary room, so here. It is very important to be on time because we will start promptly at 9:30. As you know, the procedures asks to close the doors of the Plenary room. Please be here on time so we can start the vote.

If you cannot make it on time, unfortunately, you will remain outside of the Plenary room.

Again, be on time tomorrow morning here, we're starting the election process for the ITU high officials.

I see a request for the floor from Lithuania.

Lithuania, please, you have the floor.

>> LITHUANIA: Dear ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for such an intensive day. On behalf of Lithuania delegation we would like to invite you to Lithuania reception today at half past 5:00. After such an important intervention countries, maybe some time to relax before tomorrow's really important day.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Lithuania for the invitation.

I see another request from the floor from Indonesia.

>> INDONESIA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Distinguished delegations, ladies and gentlemen, Indonesia is pleased to invite you all to our special dinner today prepared by Indonesia, it is collaboration of traditional music and performances along with the spices of Indonesia and other delicacies. this is located right next to the hall, you can take the exit and then next to the tunnel you directly pass by this museum. We will have traditional Indonesia attire people to guide all to the reception.

See you and looking forward to spending some time at the museum.

Thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Indonesia, for your invitation as well.

I give the floor now to Romania.

>> ROMANIA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the Romanian government I'm happy to announce that we are organizing for the 1, 8th, 9th of October trips for delegates to Castles, also known as the Dracula Castle, and a salt mine. Registration is free for this one‑day TRIP. You will get more information via an email that will be sent with the help of the Secretariat and on Sunday we have organized another event for all participants to PP‑22 and we'll come back with more information on the logistics via email.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Romania. Great choices! Great places to go! You all have to go there! Believe me!

I'm giving the floor now to Japan.

>> JAPAN: Thank you, Chair.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, It is my great pleasure to invite all delegates to our reception at 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. today. We're asking for your support of our candidate for TSB Director and the Japan membership to the council and we hope that you can join us for Japanese food, including sushi and Saki and a performance of Japanese musical instruments. We sincerely look forward to welcoming you all tonight for a relaxing time.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Japan. Now I'm giving the floor to Rwanda.

>> RWANDA: Thank you so much, Chair. Dear delegates, the Government of Rwanda is also prepared to host the participants at an event going from 18:30 and it will take place this evening. We welcome you all to have a taste of Rwanda culture.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Rwanda. Definitely we have an evening full of reception, we have five more, there is one more to announce. I see a request from Bahrain, another request offered by Bahrain, from 8:00. Five receptions, enjoy! Thank you very much for this Fifth Plenary!

I declare the Plenary closed.

Thank you.

(Fifth Plenary concluded at 17:28 EEST)

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