UN-OHRLLS

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

Statement by

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and
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XIV Edition of the Infopoverty World Conference

Final Roundtable and Segment Approving Final Declaration

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12.40 PM – 1.00PM

President of OCCAM and Info Poverty Programme Organisers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for organising this very important event and inviting me to speak about an issue which is of great importance to us all. Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the work being done through the Info poverty world conference since 2001.

We are all aware that the world's most vulnerable countries, that is the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, stand to benefit the most from digital innovation, because they can leapfrog the traditional development steps. MDGs and SDGs are fundamentally entwined with access to technology and digital innovation and their effective use. All the vulnerable countries are keenly aware of the potential that access to these technological advances can provide and the exponential improvements that these changes are likely to deliver to their livelihoods. Use of ICTs for access to health services, education, agriculture information and early warning have already demonstrated their clear impacts on the lives of the common people.

As momentum toward a new global partnership builds, the SDGs provide a unique opportunity for the vital role of technology to be comprehensively woven into the fabric of

future sustainable development policy, not as an addendum, but front and centre of the debate.

While national leadership and ownership are critical, challenges exist in areas including infrastructure appropriate regulatory environments, literacy, content development, market incentives, affordability and access. A holistic approach to ICT would be critical to reap the full benefit from it.

Distinguished participants,

Least Developed Countries are often constrained by high initial pricing, a lack of infrastructure, limited human capital, a weak private sector and scarce public sector resources. Furthermore, there is a significant gap in terms of broadband speed - Least Developed Countries are still slow compared to broadband connections in developed and developing countries. We should help close this digital divide. Achieving widespread deployment of broadband backbones and access to networks in remote and less densely populated areas is a particular challenge, which deserves our attention. Even today, only less than 15 per cent of population in LDCs are connected the mobile telephony.

Landlocked Developing Countries experience significant disadvantage in the development process due to geographical limitations. These countries incur substantially higher transport and other trade transaction costs when compared to coastal countries and suffer from limited

productive capacities, declining value addition in manufacturing and agriculture and heavy reliance on a limited number of primary commodities.

Information and communications technologies can contribute to economic growth in LLDCs by improving trade facilitation, increasing productivity across all the other sectors. The broad application of ICT in reducing paperwork, customs clearance, border crossing and tracking of shipments in transit would play a major role in reducing delays in border and transit procedures and formalities, reduce trade transaction costs, and promote further international trade. Improving connectivity and access to technology will be at the forefront of discussions during the forthcoming 10 year review of the Almaty Programme for Action this year.

Small Island Developing States also require extra support to develop connectivity and telecommunications networks, in view of their small size, isolated locations and being away from the major ICT highways. Yet they hold a great potential there. It is therefore ICT is figuring very high in the intergovernmental discussions and it is also included in one of the six thematic sessions of the private sector event taking place during the Samoa Conference this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

High speed networks generate jobs and are essential to long term economic competitiveness, growth and productivity. Broadband technologies have the capacity to transform lives and communities, offering low-carbon connectivity, access, inclusion, efficiency, speed,

innovation, cost-effectiveness and accountability in the journey towards sustainable development.

As a Commissioner on the ITU/ UNESCO Broadband Commission and member of the Task Force on Sustainable Development and the Post-2015, I am aware that much more needs to be done to support this Universal access to Broadband at affordable rates in all the countries in particular, the vulnerable countries. A comprehensive approach is required to make this happen. First, a national broadband plan and supportive regulatory provisions. Second, Universal access and service policy that complements a national broadband policy in order to cover all the areas and roll out broadband infrastructure. Third, end to end business models that include content developments, affordability and intersectoral collaboration. Fourth, making available technology at affordable prices to them. Fifth, capacity development and multistakeholder global partnership.

Distinguished participants,

As we evaluate the progress towards the MDGs it's clear that one of the targets, making ICT accessible to all, has experienced considerable success. The rise of more affordable mobile technology has re-framed the debate on closing the digital divide as we observe a new tide of innovative information and service delivery via mobile phones.

In order for mobile phone technology to realise its true potential in all communities, in an inclusive manner we must support government policy to facilitate the emergence of local network providers, providing incentive for direct investment and the development and maintenance of infrastructure. Public-private cooperation is a key tool for sustainable development and achieving potential SDGs depends on a "renewed global partnership" that pools expertise and resources from all in support of our shared goals.

All the dimensions of SDGs are intrinsically linked to a transformative opportunity made available through ICTs. ICT is not only an enabler of sustainable development, it is also a big multiplier and it can make public services truly inclusive at the same time. Solutions such as mobile money transfers, mobile disaster preparedness, digital education programmes such as Connect To Learn and mobile micro payment and insurance services and transparency to the local development works, e-governance, are just some examples of how technology can directly help achieve our common aspirations. As a community it is our responsibility to ensure that ICT and broadband are embedded in the universal goals and national targets to be defined as part of the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda. Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, with their specific needs and unique contexts, offer a valuable insight into the potential for transformation that technology holds for developing communities around the world.