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**Statement**

**by**

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and  
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**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries  
and Small Island Developing States**

Mobile Learning Week 2018

Symposium

**Statement**

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Deputy Director General, UNESCO,  
Hon Ministers,  
Excellencies  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here with you.

I thank UNESCO and ITU for inviting me to share a few thoughts.

OHRLLS - on behalf of the 91 countries we stand for, enjoys strong ties and a close collaboration with UNESCO and ITU. Thank you for that!

I am very happy to witness the impressive turnout at this strategic event.

Your participation testifies to the need that we must quickly and decisively move forward. That we must show collective resolve to harness the development potential that access to inclusive digital skills offers to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030 by leaving no one behind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is no ordinary time for the world and this is no ordinary meeting.

Access to information and communication technology (ICTs) has expanded at unprecedented pace. It connects millions across the globe, offers opportunities for improved governance, learning, health conditions and ignites challenges as well as opportunities in labour markets.

I am sure given the past couple weeks' discussions on data confidentiality, there is no need for me to go into flip sides to which new policy responses must be found quickly.

Now, all of what I said holds especially true for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, for which OHRLLS is a voice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Yet, these 91 countries and the more than one billion people they represent are most at risk of being left behind.

I myself come from a small island developing state. Geographical remoteness, geographical fragmentation, difficulty to achieve economies of scale in service provision, difficulties to provide adequate health care to a widely dispersed population, difficulties to offer up-to-date education - well these are the daily bread of countries but especially PEOPLE now at risk to once more being left behind if left out of the digital revolution.

I arrive here yesterday from Bangladesh where a happy event took place - yes happy news also exist! – Meeting for the first time the criteria for Graduation from LDC status and that graduation effort fully included a clear strategy of the country toward a digital economy.

In a concerted, sustained effort and with great vision the country early on worked on the hardware this takes from bandwidth provision to affordable PC, tablet, mobile access but also all of the psychological and socio-cultural features digitisation must look at.

Not surprisingly, ICT thus features very prominently in the programmes of action for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

And I do not need to tell you how the importance of access to and use of ICT is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we globally signed off on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

OHRLLS has thus formulated and implemented activities that promote ICT and in particular access to and productive use of high-speed internet in the most vulnerable countries.

Let us not forget that right now we urgently and quickly must look at “ hardware “ issues - yes 70 per cent of the world’s youth according to 2017 ITU data are online. But what about the other 30 per cent? Again, the ITU data tell us that:

*out of the 830 million young people who are online, 39 per cent are in China and India*

and

*nearly 9 out of 10 young individuals NOT using the internet live in Africa or Asia and the Pacific.*

Under the auspices of the Broadband Commission - and OHRLLS is a member of the Commission - I lead a working group on the most vulnerable countries.

Our goal is to generate better data and knowledge on best practices and opportunities related to the urgent investment we must make in broadband infrastructure lest we want to leave the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS behind.

We also must take a close look at relevant content and applications and innovative use of broadband-supported technologies in the most vulnerable countries.

It is true that the kids in these countries dream of having mobile learning, dream of becoming a marine biologist or one day be the woman getting the UNESCO women scientist OREAL prize.

But as long as we have not resolved basic hardware issues, we are a long way from giving a helping hand to make a child’s dream reality.

As part of this work, OHRLLS has produced a number of country studies, and a joint report with ITU on broadband in the least developed countries. A global policy report on broadband in the most vulnerable countries is currently being finalised. All this is undertaken to help expeditious policy making but hopefully also action-oriented partnerships.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Partnerships and cross- sectoral collaboration are key. So, I am very encouraged to see how government representatives, education specialists, mobile learning experts, project managers, researchers, and industry partners are coming together here. Your experience, your insights and stories of innovative work on the subjects under discussion are invaluable.

I hope this extraordinary experience assembled in this room, your wisdom coupled with our shared determination to find solutions will lead to action.

Action is what we owe the many women, men, girls and boys hoping to share in the gains from a digital world. I therefore urge you all to take risk, be innovative, unleash the passion that sparks ACTION.

Ladies and gentlemen,

YES WE MUST and YES WE CAN.

Let us turn to REALITY the hope in a child's eyes telling us of her or his dream for the future.

Thank you.