

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
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**Opening Session**

Address by

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## Twenty-sixth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

### Special Address by ITU Secretary-General, Doreen Bogdan-Martin

Mr. Chair,

Madam Secretary-General,

Madam President, and ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honor to address the Commission on Science and Technology for Development for the first time as ITU Secretary-General.

I grew up in a science-loving family and have always had a passion and deep respect for science since an early age and I quickly saw technology – and the promise of technology – as a promise to change the world for the better.

We see this reflected in the two priority themes chosen by the Commission this year, in the report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just last week and in the outcomes of the WSIS Forum that took place the week before last. What this shows is that technological innovation is at the top of the global agenda right now.

Digital technology was in great focus at this month's discussions at the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

And I just came back from India where Prime Minister Modi talked publicly about the efforts of the Global South to rapidly breach the technological divide describing the new ITU Area Office and Innovation Centre we were opening in New Delhi as – in his words – “a huge step in this direction.”

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are several big steps we can take right now to close the digital divides between and within countries to bring meaningful connectivity to everyone, everywhere and to use digital transformation – as recognized in the conclusions of this year's Commission on the Status of Women – “to drive breakthrough progress and new solutions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”<sup>i</sup>

These solutions will require dialogue, partnerships and collaboration among different stakeholders on a global scale. And that's been the strength of the WSIS Process for 20 years now. This year again, the WSIS Forum brought together more than 2,700 participants from over 150 countries – including Ministers, Ambassadors, mayors, entrepreneurs, tech innovators, civil society leaders, and many others.

They addressed a wide range of topics, including space – which is one of the areas of potential action outlined in the agenda for next year's Summit of the Future initiated by the UN Secretary-General, an area with tremendous potential for connectivity where we need to ensure sustainability and ITU looks forward to supporting that.

The WSIS participants and I believe all of you are driven by the same purpose, to harness the power of digital technologies to rescue the SDGs – because failure is simply not an option - Not when 2.7 billion people around the world are offline - Not when two-thirds of the population in Least Developed Countries – the majority of them women – lives in digital darkness, Not when cost remains a major obstacle to Internet access especially in low-income economies, and especially not when it is the most vulnerable among us who are being hit the hardest.

So, as we approach the WSIS+20 Review and look to the future of WSIS beyond 2025 it is important to reflect on the progress that we have made so far. The WSIS Process and the WSIS Action Lines provide a well-functioning framework for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and this global platform continues to evolve reflecting the scope, pace, complexity, and impact of today's digital transformation.

Equally important is how we use this moment to identify areas where further action is needed and where we can make a difference – together.

WSIS stakeholders had an opportunity to inform the consultative process of the Global Digital Compact during the Forum and meet with UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology Amandeep Gill and the Swedish and Rwandese Ambassadors to the UN in New York, who are the Co-Facilitators of this process, and I am pleased to see that this is also on your agenda here.

ITU is working closely with all involved to support this effort in the run up to the summit of the futures next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There were only about 10 million Internet users, 34 million mobile subscriptions, and over 600 million fixed telephone lines when this commission met for the first time almost exactly 30 years ago on an April day in New York. That month, here in Geneva, as the World Wide Web accounted for just 1% of Internet traffic, CERN put the World Wide Web software in the public domain – a move that would change the face of the Internet forever.

A lot has changed since then but CSTD has continued to provide countries with a platform to address the challenges and opportunities presented by rapid technological development – and ensure that no one is left behind.

This September during the General Assembly high-level week, countries will gather again in New York... this time to follow-up and review the implementation of the SDGs at the SDG Summit.

ITU is partnering with others including WSIS stakeholders to organize a Digital Day during that time in New York, to showcase digital-based solutions with game-changing potential for the SDGs and mobilize renewed commitments from stakeholders through the ITU-led Partner2Connect initiative.

Because Time is of the essence, we just have a few years to achieve the SDGs and keep the promise of leaving no one behind.

The WSIS Process, together with our common agenda, will help ensure that we stay on course that all voices are heard... that digital technology stays on top of the agenda and that progress is made – so that the SDGs become real in the lives of people everywhere.

Thank you.