

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-second session
Geneva, 13-17 May 2019**

**High-level roundtable on “Progress made in the implementation of and
follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit of the Information Society at
the regional and international levels”**

Statement submitted by

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Tuesday, 14 May 2019

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Speech, Dr. Abdulaziz Almuzaini
Director, Geneva Liaison Office, UNESCO

Item 2: High-level roundtable on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international level

Commission on Science and Technology for Development, twenty-second session

14 May 2019, 15-18h

Palais des Nations, Room XVII, Floor 1, E Building
Geneva, Switzerland

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by all distinguished speakers and panelists, especially the keynote speaker H.E. Ambassador Janis Karklins, who knows UNESCO so well, for their remarkable interventions.

UNESCO works to create inclusive knowledge societies and empower local communities by increasing access to and preservation and sharing of information and knowledge in its domains of action. Our vision of Information and Knowledge Societies embraces a vision of inclusive, multi-stakeholder, right-based, open, diverse and participatory approaches.

UNESCO has been at the forefront of the WSIS process since its inception and was involved in organizing regional pre-WSIS preparatory consultations. We continue to serve as the facilitator for 6 of the WSIS Action Lines coordinating global actions in the areas of:

Access to information and knowledge (C3)

E-learning (C7)

E-science (C7)

Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content (C8)

Media (C9), and

Ethical dimensions of the Information Society (C10)

UNESCO and stakeholders have achieved significant progress in a wide range of areas related to advancing freedom of expression and access to information. Specifically, UNESCO has explored the impact of emerging issues, such as AI, the Internet of Things, big data and blockchain on freedom of expression and privacy in the digital age. It is

urgent to formulate actions for unpacking the political, social, legal and human rights implications of the development and application of AI and develop the policies, practices, measures and mechanisms needed for harnessing AI to advance knowledge societies and achieve the SDGs. In this field, and as host of the thirteenth Internet Governance Forum, UNESCO contributed to shaping a global dialogue in 2018 on AI, which addressed transversely a number of WSIS action lines.

Initiatives for 2018 cover WSIS Action Lines by bringing to bear the breadth of UNESCO's multi-sectoral mandates. Quality education for all, freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, the ethical dimensions of the information society, and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity remain among UNESCO's highest programmatic goals moving forward to support the 2030 Agenda.

In WSIS Action Line C3 (Access to Information and Knowledge), the third annual commemoration of the 28 September International Day for Universal Access to Information, offered excellent opportunities for Member States to draw attention to mainstreaming one of the central pillars supporting overall SDG achievement.

In Action Line C7 (ICT Applications: e-Learning and e-Science), and in the framework of the Qingdao Declaration (2015) on leveraging ICT for Achieving Education 2030, we convened the second International Conference on ICT and Education 2030. UNESCO also launched the Gender Assessment Tools for Teacher Education and developed a framework for an online monitoring resource for the implementation of the Ljubljana Open Educational Resources Action Plan, and published the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers Version 3 in 2018.

To support Action Line C8 (Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content), UNESCO has continued to integrate ICTs throughout its programmatic work in the field of culture in 2018. Actions were undertaken to protect and promote tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the diversity of cultural expressions, and the cultural and creative industries, in particular contributing to the protection of culture in emergency situations, including natural disasters, through the use of ICTs.

As a milestone achievement of WSIS Action Line C9 (media) implementation, on 21 November 2018, the 31st Session of UNESCO's IPDC (International Programme for the Development of Communication) Council decided to welcome the Internet Universality Indicators based on R.O.A.M. principles that urge that digital development be aligned with human Rights, Openness, Accessibility and Multi-stakeholder governance. This is a tool for voluntary use. These indicators serve as an internationally recognized toolkit to help stakeholders to assess their own national environment and develop Internet policies that will effectively advance human rights and contribute to achieving the 2030 SDGs.

UNESCO's IPDC continues to support an extensive range of media development activities in developing countries and countries in transition worldwide. The efforts of the IPDC have had an important impact on a broad range of fields covering, among others, protecting safety of journalists, the promotion of media independence and pluralism, development of community media, radio and television organizations, modernization of national and regional news agencies, and training of journalists and media professionals.

In the framework of UNESCO's work as facilitator for action line C10 (Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society) of the WSIS process and follow up and within the realm of its work on information ethics as part of its Intergovernmental Information for All Programme, the Organization has promoted cooperation to ensure the development of universally held values and principles to further inclusive knowledge societies, notably in a world of rapid technological change and the development of artificial intelligence.

In the field of UNESCO's work on artificial intelligence, UNESCO's mandate calls inherently for a human-centred approach to AI; to shift the conversation to include AI's role in addressing current inequalities regarding access to knowledge, research and the diversity of cultural expressions and to ensure AI does not widen the technological divides within and between countries. The promise of "AI for all" must be that everyone can take advantage of the technological revolution under way and access its fruits, notably in terms of innovation and knowledge.

UNESCO is committed to facilitating a philosophical reflection on the impact of AI and what it is to be human, how this technology will affect humanity, and on the ethics of AI in subjects such as education, culture, the sciences, and communication and information.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In closing, I would like to underline that one of the two priority themes of the Commission this year - the impact of rapid technological change on sustainable development – is at the heart of UNESCO's current reflections and actions to ensure that ICTs are harnessed, across the Organization's mandate, to contribute to Agenda 2030. UNESCO looks forward to continuing to work closely with the CSTD and ECOSOC to formulate, alongside stakeholders, proposals and chart a roadmap forward to ensure cooperation in the field of ICTs for sustainable development