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WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION/ICT POLICY FORUM

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>> CHAIR: Good morning! Good afternoon! Good evening, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Welcome once again to the second Plenary, closing Plenary of the WTPF‑21. I must express my appreciation for the excellent work done over the past two days to get us this far.

Before we start this Plenary, I would like to invite the Ambassador from Gambia to take the floor to deliver his statement, as he had connection issues on Thursday.

Your Excellency, you have the floor.

>> GAMBIA: Madam Chair, good morning. Thank you for the consideration. We're very grateful and appreciative and we also congratulate you and everyone for a very successful two days.

Chairperson, Secretary‑General of the ITU, Honorable Ministers and heads of delegations, Distinguished Delegates, development partners, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, all protocols dually observed.

I'm delivering this statement on behalf of Honorable Minister of Gambia. At the onset, I thank and congratulate the ITU for organizing and host the 6th World Telecommunication ICT policy forum. The importance and timing of this policy dialogue cannot be over emphasized. The forum is being held at a time when it is quite apparent that policies and regulations and investments, the right one, ICT has a huge potential of enhancing the socioeconomic status of our people whilst bridging the economic divide between developed and developing countries.

Chairperson, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, innovation and advances in digitalization on emerging technologies have an impactful effect on the way trade and productions are conducted, supply chains, delivery of healthcare, broader access to quality education and learning engagement, efficiency, transparency of government and the delivery of services to broader citizen. Speedy development of digitalization driven by dynamic growth in emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, treaty printing, nano technologies provide the means for increasing the digitalization of economies. The result of such emerging technologies is that digital dataflows are grown both in terms of speed and volume. Traditional ways of manufacturing and producing goods and services, learning engagements and access to quality content for acquisitions, creation and sharing, they have changed as a result and we have seen significant improvements in productivity and efficiency.

Furthermore, we have witnessed an increase in manufacturing opportunities and specialization within and between neighboring countries.

The regional and subregional value chains supported by digital technologies and cross‑border dataflows are expanding due to advances in digital infrastructure and new enabling technologies. We are of the view that robust, resilient, affordable broadband connectivity and data infrastructure must be core and critical priority infrastructure for us. The rise of economies is providing opportunities for newer business models and a diversity of digital platforms and services to usher in the digital platform and services economy which our countries are still behind. Rapid and swift expansion of the digital economy is facilitating and driving digital trade, consequently developing greater opportunities to expand intra and extra trade among regional Member States and others. Against the backdrop of all of this shift and dynamic of currencies with demanding technologies and a changing dynamics of getting things done, it is the fact that available evidence demonstrates that the impact of digitization is uneven across countries and sectors.

Ladies and gentlemen, and Madam Chairperson, the Government of Gambia has the concern of potential ICTs in enhancing the socioeconomic development initiatives has in the past decade worked towards the establishment of landmark and game changing projects in the Gambia ICT sector as enshrined in critical enabler 5 of our National Development Plan 2018 to 2021. The Gambia National Development Plan seeks to transform the country into a digital nation and create a modern Information Society. The sector has registered remarkable growth in terms of access and quality service delivery since the rollout of the national fiber backbone and the landing of a submarine cable in 2012. These landmark achievements have also enriched the spirit of competition in the ICT Telecom sector and helped ensure that services become more competitive and affordable to the average end user.

Additionally, the ICT policy adopted in 2005 and the ICT for Development Policy 2018 to 2028 provides strategic direction for the obtainment of the ICT development region of the Government of Gambia. The NICI policy was anchored in building and sustaining partnerships with the private sector and donors working for an effective information and communication infrastructure and enabling country‑wide connectivity and achieving a liberal, competitive ICT market offering consumer choice through affordability and quality of service delivery. Both these policies also enabled prioritization of critical socioeconomic issue, such as the proliferation of ICT‑driven socioeconomic solutions in education and most importantly in public health delivery.

Chairperson, distinguished guests, it is important to note that to bridge the digital divide in our Digital Transformation and for sustainable, agile digital infrastructure, our policy and direction as guided by ICT for Development Policy 2018 to 2028, the ICT Sectors current blueprint strongly focuses on Internet resilience, governance, universal access to broadband connectivity with affordability for our citizens. This is further reinforced by the COVID‑19 pandemic which has without doubt evidenced that the fact that the use of online digital technologies and services for our day‑to‑day work is not a luxury, but a necessity for all, irrespective of where you live and your social status.

As part of strategies put in place to ensure Internet resilience, governance and affordability, my ministry is keenly looking into achieving last‑mile affordable connectivity, reviewing the broadband value chain and tackling existing bottlenecks. Moreover, to support achievement of the country's digital agenda our government has identified the landing of a second submarine cable as a priority for redundancy purposes. To this end, plans are in place to include the country in the capital submarine project where other avenues are being explored with the World Bank and other partners.

Furthermore, to ensure digital inclusion, the Government of the Gambia is putting in place necessary measures for the implementation of the universal access regime. The universal access service is earmarked to support the last mile access to affordable broadband services, to ensure the existence of robust laws, regulations and policy regimes to address the current, future needs of the sector, given the dynamic nature and I wish to inform Excellencies and colleagues that the Gambia is currently reviewing the Information and Communication Act 2009 which is the law governing the sector. In partnership with the regulator, the licensing regimes and accompanying regulations are being reviewed with a view to further encourage more private sector participation and optimal use of existing ICT infrastructure.

The uptick of digital services is dependent on the rate of digital literacy in Gambia. The government is putting together in space the requisite policy space and regulatory measures to support the rollout of digital literacy programmes and digital learning technologies, platforms and services. This is given the fact that we have a bubble, a growing youth population and a stepped up interest in Women and Girls in building capabilities in ICTs and digitization. Thus, we are obliged to provide modern stepped up skills and competencies required to develop and advance the more ICT population that are participants and producers, actors and agents across the value chains.

The process is informed by a feasibility study conducted by the ministry which supports from the African Development Bank.

Chairperson, distinguished guests, what we do realize against the backdrop of all of this swift, dynamic occurrences with emerging technologies and the changing dynamics of doing things, it is the evidence that the impact of digitalization is uneven across countries and sectors. Thus, we are mindful that the potential positive effects of Digital Transformation in the Gambia can be hindered by lack of technicals, structural barriers to new infrastructure, lack of availability to or access to the broadband connectivity, digital and data infrastructure and appropriate skills and competency gaps.

On a similar note, it is critical to support that security is a key issue in our Digital Transformation and to establish and deploy data infrastructure. To this effect, to help address cybersecurity and cybercrime related issues and strengthen the country's international cooperation in the fight against cybercrime a holistic policy and strategy on cybersecurity has been formulated with the cybercrime on digital protection on privacy are expected to be tabled before parliament by the first quarter of 2022. The Gambia is part of many global service alliances and signatories to conventions, including the GFCE, OECRW and is in the process of domesticating the other processes.

>> CHAIR: Excellency, can you complete your intervention? Thank you very much.

>> GAMBIA: As part of this effort with research and development, increasing innovation in our economy, solving the unemployment problem, the Government of Gambia is working on mobilizing the requisite funds for the establishment of a National Technological Act and rural information and innovation hubs.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our commendation to the ITU for the support over the years and as well express on behalf of the Government of the Gambia our renewed commitment to support and continued collaboration with the ITU.

We look forward to a very successful ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 2022.

We thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Your Excellency.

For this last plenary, we have the draft agenda as found in ADM/9.

It is on our screen.

If there are no comments, I would like to seek your approval of this agenda.

Thank you. I don't see any hands up. The agenda is approved. We now move to the oral reports of the Working Groups.

You had very constructive discussion in the Working Groups and I am pleased to invite the Chairs of the Working Groups to report on their work.

Their written reports will be included in my report.

I would first like to invite Mr. Roberto Mitsuake Hirayama to present the report of Working Group 1.

>> WORKING GROUP 1: Thank you, Madam Chair. Greetings to all colleagues.

The Working Group 1 was Chaired by me, and our Vice‑Chairman Mr. Aymen Almogherah. We met twice on the 16th and 17th of December, and we also had some opening remarks of myself, the Vice‑Chair, and the BDT Director Doreen, Doreen Bogdan‑Martin. We appreciated and discussed two opinions, draft opinions 1 and 2, and we had discussions on both of them.

In opinion 1, enabling environment for the development and implement of new and emerging telecommunication ICT services and technologies to advance Sustainable Development, we had two contributions and we discussed and had the presentations of both of them. We also had several oral inputs received through the floor, from delegates and the overall changes that were ‑‑ that had consensus in the meeting reflected in the opinion 1 that's set out for us today.

We had various discussions some proposals to include IpV6 in some parts of opinion 1, which we ended up adding reference in opinion 2.

Some discussions about qualifiers from barriers to investment and the discussions of the terminology of complimentary access solutions that as a compromise we retained complementary connectivity solutions.

At the end, we endorsed the draft opinion 1 with the changes that were agreed in meeting.

For opinion 2, we discussed the opinion 2 which is affordable, secure connectivity in mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications ICTs for Sustainable Development. We had also two contributions, from Brazil and another one from Internet Society. As usual, we had the oral presentations of both of them, and the discussions with several inputs from the floor as well.

I want to highlight one of them, which was in some parts of the text, some Delegates suggested to delete and restrict the references for example of 5G rollout but in some cases we retained the original text.

Overall, with the discussions, we endorsed opinion 2 as well and with the changes agreed and putting forward the two text for the Plenary.

I thank all of the discussions and all of the contributors for their views and appreciated all of the efforts from everyone to reach this very important agreement.

Thank you very much, back to you, Madam Chair.

>> CHAIR:

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Mitsuake Hirayama, for your excellent leadership, and I also thank Mr. Aymen Almogherah for assisting you as Vice‑chair.

Are there any comments.

From the floor.

I will now give the floor to Dr. Lidia Stepinska‑Ustasia to present the report of Working Group 2.

Lidia, you have the floor.

>> WORKING GROUP 2: I have had the pleasure to Chair the Working Group 2 together with Mr. Ahmed Riad Ismail, the Vice‑Chair.

We met on 17th of December. We had one meeting, and the subject of the discussion was draft opinion 3, digital literacy and skills and draft opinion 4, new and emerging technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunication/ICTs for Sustainable Development.

In the case of draft opinion 3 we discussed the document as well as written contributions, and one also from Internet Society. Contributors presented their contributions already for the meeting's consideration and we had several oral inputs from the floor. All those changes that were discussed have been implemented and we achieved the consensus.

In addition, some delegates made various proposals for the meeting consideration, including inter alia the following, enable infrastructure development that in their opinion should be included under section 4 of the view prior to foster digital empowerment and inclusion.

But following discussions by the meeting, those agreed to not specifically list the suggested phrase, but instead to modify this section 4 to make it more flexible and to make it possible to cover other options as well.

In case of draft opinion 4, we discussed the document and the written contributions from the Internet Society.

The Working Group endorsed draft opinion 4 in its unchanged format so we achieved here the consensus.

So thank you very much to all contributors and to Vice‑Chairman for the excellent cooperation and thank you for the floor.

>> Can

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Dr. Stepinska‑Ustasia. And thanks to your Vice‑Chair, Mr. Ahmed Riad Ismail.

Are there any comments?

I see none.

Last but not the least, I would like to invite Mr. Jim Paterson to present the report of Working Group 3.

Jim, you have the floor.

>> WORKING GROUP 3: Thank you kindly, Madam Chair.

Good day to all the colleagues.

Working Group 3, it was Chaired by myself, Jim Patterson from South Africa, and assisted by the Vice‑Chair, Ms. Natalia Vicente from the EMEA satellite officer association. We met on the 17th of December from 2:00 to 3:00 Central European time. And the Chair, Vice‑Chair, and the BR Director Mario Maniewicz had made opening remarks for the work of the group and we discussed the draft opinion number 5, which was on the use of telecommunications and ICTs in COVID‑19 and future pandemic and epidemic preparedness and response. We received a written contribution from the Internet Society, which is WTPF21/07 and they presented orally and expressed support for the draft opinion.

Several oral inputs were received from the discussions of the draft opinion from Delegates during the meeting, and one change was agreed by consensus and it is reflected in the draft opinion set out in Part II of the report and that was concerning the vital importance of providing innovative tools and to improve lives and accelerate Sustainable Development in many areas, include and responding to the COVID‑19 pandemic.

In addition, some delegates made various proposals for the meeting's consideration, including we had a discussion on affordable connectivity and whether we should add devices to this term, but it was agreed that actually ‑‑ it was agreed to retain the original text because it was felt that affordable connectivity includes devices.

That was this sections B and C of recognizing of the opinion.

We also had a discussion around the inclusion of governmental and non‑governmental organizations in addition to the term international organizations, but it was agreed it was well recognized that within ITU that international organizations includes governmental and non‑governmental organizations and therefore we agreed to retain the original text in this respect as well.

In view of the discussions, the Working Group 3 then endorsed draft opinion 5 with the change that was agreed to in the meeting and we have submit it had now to the Plenary for approval. I would like to once again thank the Vice‑Chair, Natalia Vivent, Mr. Mario, the Secretariat, the interpreters and captioners and I would like the opportunity, Madam Chair, to thank you for the excellent leadership WTPF‑2021.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much Mr. Paterson and thanks also to your Vice‑Chair, Ms. Natalia Vicente.

Are there any comments? Ladies and gentlemen in, absence of any comments then, following the reports from

the Working Groups, I am pleased to put forward for your consideration and adoption the following opinions:

Draft Opinion 1: Enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development, posted on the web as DT/1.

Draft Opinion 2: Affordable and Secure Connectivity in mobilizing New and Emerging Telecommunications/ICTs for Sustainable Development, posted on the web as DT/2

Draft Opinion 3: Digital literacy and skills for inclusive access, posted on the web as DT/3

Draft Opinion 4: New and emerging technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development, posted on the web as DT/4

Draft Opinion 5: Use of telecommunications/ICTs in COVID‑19 and future pandemic and epidemic preparedness and response, posted on the web as DT/5

I would therefore like to invite your comments on the Draft Opinions. I suggest we proceed one at a time.

Are there any comments on Draft Opinion 1.

I see none. Thank you.

Then we approve Draft Opinion 1.

Are there any comments on draft opinion 2? I see a hand up.

From the Vice‑Chair of Working Group 3. You have the floor.

>> WORKING GROUP 3 VICE‑CHAIR: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to all of the delegates and to everyone who has been working during this time and all these last few days.

I have a slight comment on draft opinion 2. We went through some of the details as the Chair has said on the 5G specific references, and we have considered there are two more points which we think it is unnecessary to make a specific reference to 5G as it is on the recognizing D and in the invite Member State members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively, number three, in both of those, we refer to next generation networks and new and emerging communications and ICTs and we think that for harmonization also throughout all of the documents there's no need to specify 5G. It is already included when we talk about next generation technologies and emerging telecommunications, and we think it doesn't add more than just a specific focus of that particular technology. We propose to delete those references.

I have made also available in written to the Chair and in general, just a comment that we have received also from some other delegates, we would like to just have a clarification and recognition that when we refer to AI, IoT, 5G, the list of technologies that we are focusing on, that those technologies are understood as artificial and space‑based.

Those are the two changes I propose in opinion 2 that I hope the delegates can agree on as it is just a small change and it is already included in the new emerging technologies and telecommunications and ICTs.

And I thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Vice‑Chair of Working Group 3, for those comments. I refer that for your consideration.

Canada, I see your hand up.

You have the floor, Canada, Mr. Santiago.

>> CANADA: Apology, there was a delay for the authorization for me to use the microphone.

I will start my video as well.

Thank you very much, again, Madam Chair for your guidance, your conduction of the meeting.

I would point out we're at the end of 26 months of highly, intensive, successful work. We have already had approved at least in principle the five opinions at the level of the informal expert group. We had multiple meetings, seven meetings, and we had multiple informal meetings, and then the meetings held in the last two days. It is Canada's understanding that the text of draft opinion 2 that we discussed thoroughly yesterday was at least in principle approved understanding the right that everyone has to open again the text of the approved in principle opinions, maybe best would be to invite the Chair of Working Group number 1 to tell us if there is anything that we missed yesterday and the day before.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Santiago.

Roberto, do you have any comments on these interventions? Chair of Working Group 1.

>> WORKING GROUP 1: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't think we missed anything yesterday. It is ‑‑ it is a new point that's being made by the person of our Vice‑Chair. The two changes that are proposed, it tries to align to some discussions that we had in other parts of opinion but they were not raised yesterday so I think we ‑‑ if ‑‑ if we could address very quickly these two, it would be okay. If we have any kind of opposition, we just stick to the existing text. That's my proposal.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Roberto.

United States, you have the floor.

>> UNITED STATES of AMERICA: Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, good evening, good morning, everyone.

I think for the United States our view is that we have done a lot of work as Canada has noted since I think the first Secretary‑General's report was posted I think in August of 2019. We do note that 5G was among technologies mentioned in Council decision 611 and therefore we think that the references in this opinion should be retained as they are without any further changes.

Thank you.

It.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, United States.

I see Iran's hand up. Iran, you have the floor.

>> ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Thank you, honorable Excellency, Chair of the meeting.

Chair, distinguished Chair lady, G5 is one of the fundamental and important element that we are discussing in ITU for years and we're working and we're proud that we are about to finish all of the standards for that.

Secondly, Distinguished Delegate of Canada, very rightly mention that had we have discussed this at length and we come to this sort of conclusions and consensus.

Perhaps, Madam Chair, may I suggest that we approve the opinion with virtual acclimation without any further discussions.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Iran.

I see no other hand up.

So the rules of the forum, which require consensus on any amendment, failing which the draft opinion as presented stands is clear that Canada, the U.S., Iran are objecting to the proposed Amendments. The draft opinion as presented by the vice ‑‑ by the Chairperson is presented to the floor for approval and the proposed amendment is rejected.

Thank you. We approve draft opinion 2.

Are there any comments on draft opinion 3.

I see Huawei's hand up. You have the floor.

>> HUAWEI: Thank you, Chair. Can you hear me?

>> CHAIR: We can hear you. Please proceed.

>> HUAWEI: Thank you, Chairman. Distinguished colleagues, may I go back to the opinion 2?

>> CHAIR: No. I'm afraid we just approved it and so we're on draft opinion 3.

>> HUAWEI: Sorry for the late comments.

I would like to not change an element, however, I want to ‑‑ the title of the resolution, I think maybe it could be added to the text, I think it is the editor comments, maybe we can raise it offline.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR: I believe so. We're now on draft opinion 3.

>> HUAWEI: I see. Thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: You're most welcome.

I don't see any hand up.

So thank you. We approve draft opinion 3.

Any comments on draft opinion 4?

I don't see a hand up. I take it that we approve draft opinion 4.

Thank you very much.

Are there any further comments on draft opinion 5? Thank you, Distinguished Delegates. I don't see a hand up and so we approve draft opinion 5. Well done.

I think we're almost at the end of a very successful session.

Ladies and gentlemen, Distinguished Delegates, Your Excellencies, it is my pleasure to present my report of your adoption, it is published as Document 13, and in English only for the moment as it was finalized this morning. It will be available early next week in all languages.

In the first part, I review briefly the history of the WTPF and the excellent preparatory process.

I then explain the roll‑out of the first Plenary meeting, including the presentation of the Secretary‑General's Report by the Deputy Secretary‑General, Mr. Malcolm Johnson, as well as the interventions by our esteemed colleagues, followed by the creation of the working groups and their work.

Excellencies, do you have any comments on Part I as outlined above? I see none.

In Part II, I include the final version of the opinions which were adopted today. Since they were adopted with no amendment, they will be published as presented.

Would you have any comments on Part II, Excellencies? I see none.

Finally, in Annex 1 you will find the reports from the chairs of the working groups.

With that brief introduction, I request your endorsement of my report.

Thank you very much.

I would now like to pass the floor to the Secretary‑General to share his thoughts on this WTPF with us.

Mr. Secretary‑General, Your Excellency, you have the floor u.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, and Ladies and Gentlemen:

WTPF‑21 now draws to a close. It was our first WTPF in eight years! And it was also the first WTPF to take place entirely online!

Over the last three days, more than 400 participants logged in to follow the discussions. They represent over 90 ITU Member States, 40 Sector Members and close to 10 Observers also joined us. Also, we are falling short 10 percent of reaching gender parity.

On the first day, close to 30 Ministers and other high‑level public and private sector officials took the floor to deliver official statements. They highlighted the opportunities and challenges presented by new and emerging technologies in a world where ICTs play a key role in people's lives.

The Forum then delved into the text of the five draft Opinions prepared by the Informal Experts Group. The discussions were robust and frank, and I am pleased that the spirit of collaboration of our ITU family prevailed over the debates.

These Opinions send a strong message to the world that new and emerging technologies and ICTs in general are essential to achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind.

I would like to take a moment to recognize all those who have made this possible.

Let me start with all the members of the Informal Experts Group, including their outstanding Chairman in the person of Mr. Fabio Bigi of Italy. We are very grateful for everything this group has done over the last two years.

Our thanks also go to the Chair of the Forum, Her Excellency the Minister for Communications and Digitalization of Ghana, Mrs. Ursula Owusu‑Ekuful. Madam Minister, we can't thank you enough for chairing WTPF‑21 and for all you are doing for ICTs and ITU in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

I would like to thank the Vice‑Chairs of the Forum ‑ Mr. Mansour AlQurashi of Saudi Arabia for the Arab region; Mr. Alexander Olegovich Mokryagin of Belarus for CIS; Mr. Víctor Martínez Vanegas of Mexico for the Americas; Ms. Cristiana Flutur of Romania for Europe; Mr. Ahmed Said of Egypt for Africa; and Dr. Ahmad Reza Sharafat of Iran for Asia Pacific.

Let me now thank the Chair of the Working Group 1, Mr. Roberto Mitsuake Hirayama of Brazil, and the Vice‑Chair, Mr. Aymen I. Almogherah of Saudi Telecom Company; the Chair of Working Group 2, Ms. Lidia Stepinska‑Ustasiak of Poland, and the Vice‑Chair, Mr. Ahmed Riad Ismail of Huawei; as well as the Chair of Working Group 3, Mr. Jim Paterson of South Africa, and the Vice‑Chair, Ms. Natalia Vicente of ESOA ‑ EMEA Satellite Operator's Association.

May I please ask these Chairs and Vice‑Chairs to turn on their cameras and to join the Chair of the Forum, the Chairman of the Informal Experts Group and the Elected Officials for a group photo?

Thank you!.

Can you please take care of ‑‑ let's all smile.

I think it is done. Thank you.

Now I would like to present Minister Owusu‑Ekuful and Mr. Fabio Bigi with a token of our appreciation. First, I will show the certificate to recognize Her Excellency, Minister of communication and digitalization of the Republic of Ghana for chairing the 6th World Telecommunication and information and technology policy forum 2021 and for her outstanding contribution to the Union.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Have you taken a photo.

Thank you.

I look forward to handing this to her in person.

I have another certificate, for Fabio Bigi.

Let's recognize Fabio Bigi, expert and advisor to the Ministry of economic development of Italy, Chairman in formal expert group for WTPF‑21 for his outstanding contribution to the work of the 6th World Telecommunication information and telecommunication technology policy forum 2021.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Good. Of course, I do wish to hand this to our distinguished Minister and Fabio in person as we have time.

>> CHAIR: We will!

>> HOULIN ZHAO: I also want to thank the interpreters, captioners, and the technicians who play an important role to help us for this conference.

That includes also the ITU IS team as well as all of the ITU staff involved in the preparation and the running of the forum and of course, in particular, Preetam's and Beatrice's teams.

Let me finally thank all the Regional Coordinators, heads of delegations and all the participants of WTPF‑21.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Swiss Authority and Geneva Authority to support WTPF‑21, including their commitment to give us this and their nice action to put the ITU flag on the famous bridge of Geneva during the entire peered of WTPF‑2021.

It is now time to close this forum. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Deputy Director and the Directors of the ITU management to wish you a little bit in advance a Happy New Year! Our wish for 2022 is to build on what we have achieved here together to connect the unconnected and to drive the development of ICTs and new and emerging technologies for the benefit of all.

Stay safe and see you soon ‑‑ physically ‑‑ in 2022!

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary‑General, for those inspiring words.

Now Secretary‑General, ladies and gentlemen, it has been my honor, an absolute pleasure, to chair this forum. Our discussions were based on a text that had been carefully crafted and negotiated, the balanced and forward looking set of opinions that will help I believe set the Digital Transformation on a positive path.

Our discussions here over the last three days have been robust and constructive, always pressing on all of the important issues of the day.

I know I speak on behalf of everyone when I say that you all rose to the moment.

Thank you.

This was made possible by the excellent work of the informal experts group and the tireless efforts of the Chair's and Vice‑Chairs of the Working Groups.

Thank you all for your dedication, commitment and leadership.

I want to congratulate the ITU Secretary‑General Houlin Zhao, Deputy Secretary‑General Malcolm Johnson, all other ITU elected officials, the ITU Secretariat and the Vice‑Chairs of the forum. I know how much work went into making this a successful event and I also want to thank all those who worked behind the scenes to make WTPF‑21 successful, the interpreter, captioners and the ITU staff.

Two days ago I encouraged you to make history. I believe we have done so because this is the first virtual WTPF ever he would and the first time since 2013 that we are meeting.

While it is still too soon to know if what we did here will pass the test of time, I'm confident that the documents approved today will lay a foundation to leverage technology for Sustainable Development for everyone, everywhere.

I look forward to working with all of you in the new year that opens before us and to seeing everyone in person.

I wish us all a happy holidays and a happy new year! God bless you all! I hope to see you all very soon! Thank you!.

I would now like to open the floor for any comments. The floor is open.

I see a hand up, Mr. Fabio Bigi, you have the floor.

>> FABIO BIGI: It is only to thank you, Chair Lady. Thanks for your performance, you have endorsed the results of the expert group and I think we put a good foundation for the future of the ICT and people like you is necessary for progressing the activity of the Union and to keep it ongoing.

Thank you very much. That's the only reason why I request the floor.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Fabio Bigi.

The Gambia, you have the floor, Excellency.

>> GAMBIA: Like Mr. Bigi, I want to thank the Secretary‑General and team for his leadership and particularly, Madam Chair, the brilliant way and manner you have conducted this unique ITU WTPF virtually. What this testifies is the future is digital as requiring our collective efforts to make the world better digitally and inclusive, Digital World. We thank you very much.

This has been fantastic.

Mr. Secretary‑General, thank you for your leadership and everyone.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, the Gambia.

I now invite the Vice‑Chair of WTPF Ahmad Reza Sharafat to take the floor.

You have the floor.

>> AHMAD REZA SHARAFAT: I offer you my heartiest, sincere congratulations on the way you chaired our meeting and this is an immense success. It has been a family effort over two years and I'm extremely happy that the results is so excellent, and it as the Secretary‑General mentioned, the entire telecommunication ICT industry, the sector will look at the five opinions that have come out of this forum.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for the way you led us in the discussions and I offer my heartiest thanks to my good friend, Mr. Fabio Bigi, for the excellent work in the past 20‑some months.

Similarly, I offer my thanks to the Secretariat, I have been involved in these efforts for the past two years. I know how difficult it has been for quite some time and eventually we managed and the outcome is successful.

On behalf of my own administration, the countries in Asia‑Pacific that I have the honor to be their representative in the management Committee of WTPF, I wish you all the best, successful new year and happy holidays.

Thank you, and back to you, Madam Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I don't see any other hand up. It is a great pleasure of mine to now conclude the WTPF.

I thank you all for excellent participation and wish you well during this festive end of year period. Hopefully next year by this time we will be meeting in person in Geneva.

Best wishes from me in Ghana and I encourage us all to stay safe.

Thank you very much for a very successful conference.

Thank you.

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