General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

Second Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Jürgenson . . . . (Estonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 21: Globalization and interdependence (*continued*)

(a) **Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence** (*continued*) (A/72/301)

(b) **Science, technology and innovation for development** (*continued*) (A/72/257)

(c) **Culture and sustainable development** (*continued*) (A/72/336)

(d) **Development cooperation with middle-income countries** (*continued*) (A/72/329)

1.   **Mr. Bilan** (Ukraine) said that his delegation supported collaboration between Member States and the United Nations system to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to science and technology. In that regard, the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other United Nations organizations was particularly useful. The report of the Secretary-General on science, technology and innovation for development (A/72/257) presented vivid examples that collaboration on global and bilateral science, technology and innovation initiatives had strengthened research, education and vocational training in developing and least developed countries.

2.   Although Ukraine was going through one of the most difficult stages in its modern history, it continued to share best practices and technologies and was a proud provider of global innovations and experts, who were making valuable contributions in a number of critical fields. Science, technology and innovation, including environmentally sound technologies, played a role in addressing the wide range of global challenges to the achievement of sustainable development and Member States should take practical steps to use those technologies in support of their vital interests.

3.   Governments and international development bodies should support education through science scholarships, courses, and research and development grants for educational institutions and talented individuals. Such support would foster synergy on sustainable development issues and help bridge the technology gap in developing countries. Ukraine remained convinced that education and training were fundamental to achieve technological progress.

4.   **Monsignor Grysa** (Observer for the Holy See) said that globalization was reshaping the world.

However, its benefits had been largely felt in developed countries and many of its costs had fallen disproportionately on the developing world. The ability of Governments in the developing world to shape the economic future of their nations had also declined.

5.   Pope Francis had said that, in a globalized world, development must be sustainable and just, keeping the rights of the poor and respect for the environment close to heart. The globalization of markets must coincide with the globalization of solidarity. The family was the most important bridge between the individual and the State.

6.   One result of globalization was increasing international economic interdependence. The peoples of the world were also increasingly interdependent because of climate change. Pope Francis had further stated in his encyclical *Laudato Si* that, because of globalization, solutions must be proposed from a global perspective, thinking of one world with a common plan. However, the ingenuity that had brought about enormous technological progress had as yet proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave global environmental and social problems.

7.   The Holy See was increasingly worried about globalized indifference towards the poor and marginalized, including migrants and refugees. That indifference extended to those affected by the negative impacts of environmental degradation. The international community must work interdependently to achieve greater responsible cooperation. A failure to do so would make the world and the planet poorer and more unsustainable. Without a change of heart, the hope for integral human development for all would remain a dream.

8.   **Mr. Carvalho Pinheiro** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that while there were many reasons for optimism about globalization, there was also a perception that it had led to deeper inequalities. Concerns centred on the failure of globalization to meet the simple aspirations of so many to obtain decent work and provide a better future for their families. People feared the impact of trade agreements and open competition that allowed migrants to take their jobs. There was also a strong perception that finance was not working for the real economy and that technology would displace workers.

9.   ILO was conducting an in-depth examination of the future of work to help provide an analytical basis for the delivery of social justice and fair globalization in the twenty-first century. Humans could shape the future of work and make technology work for them rather than the other way around. ILO had therefore established a

Global Commission on the Future of Work that focused on the relationship between work and society; the challenge of creating decent jobs for all; the organization of work and production; and the governance of work. The Commission would draw from the outcomes of national dialogues in over 110 countries to produce an independent report in June 2019.

10. The conversation on globalization and the future of work often focused on the impact of technology in driving change, but one of the most daunting challenges ahead would be to reduce income inequality. Real wages had stagnated in many parts of the world and lagged behind productivity growth, corporate profits and property income. On the economic side, high income inequality appeared to be a root cause of recent weak aggregate demand, which could lead to cyclical low productivity and economic stagnation. On the social side, the disparity between economic growth and wage growth meant that workers and their families were not receiving their fair share of the gains they had helped generate. That fuelled frustration and hampered social cohesion.

11. To fix globalization and foster sustainable growth in societies, policies must be created to help working people attain decent jobs. That would include the generation of new employment opportunities with decent wages; extended social protection; respect for labour standards; and the promotion of social dialogue. ILO looked forward to working with partners in the United Nations system and its Member States to devise appropriate policy options for fair globalization and decent work for all.

12. **Ms. Gottlieb** (International Chamber of Commerce) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Fulfilling the promise of globalization: advancing sustainable development in an interconnected world" (A/72/301). The report pointed to three emerging mega-trends: global shifts in production and labour markets, rapid technological change, and climate change. Global challenges required global solutions, but also solutions at the community, regional and national levels to meaningfully address the issues faced by stakeholders.

13. Global agreements could solve global challenges. The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was one such agreement that provided a platform to harness the potential of science, technology and innovation. Building on the Clean Development Mechanism for trading greenhouse gas emissions, the Paris Agreement implemented nationally determined contributions. Voluntary cooperation and the use of such market mechanisms would mitigate emissions and enable sustainable development by identifying the most cost-efficient options. A solid framework for stakeholders would create new channels for climate finance, leading to technology transfer and capacity-building to support sustainable development.

14. Innovation, international cooperation and diplomacy in science and technology, and related public-private partnerships, could contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, many inclusive, frugal and pro-poor innovations were supporting, and more importantly empowering, vulnerable populations around the world to maximize their limited resources. People were the greatest assets and empowerment could come from within. Therefore, capacity-building in literacy on sustainable development, technology, trade, finance and investment was critical, especially for women, girls and vulnerable populations.

15. Although challenges remained, globalization had enormous potential to achieve the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals. The International Chamber of Commerce would continue to work to fulfil the promise of globalization by enhancing multi-stakeholder engagement.

Agenda item 16: Information and communications technologies for development (A/72/64-E/2017/12)

16. **Ms. Sirimanne** (Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "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 levels" (A/72/64-E/2017/12), said that despite continued growth in access to information and communications technology (ICT), over half of the world's population remained offline. Significant digital divides existed across regions, genders, age groups and rural and urban areas. Especially significant was the divide between the developed and developing worlds and the gender divide in Africa.

17. Challenges to expanding access to ICT included geography, a lack of complementary infrastructure, such as electrical networks, and regulatory weaknesses for investment in innovation. Governments, the private sector and civil society must redouble their efforts to ensure societies had access to and benefited from ICT.

18. The digitalization of trade was rapidly increasing and reshaping the global economic landscape in virtually all sectors and businesses, including in

developing countries. Trade in ICT services had surged by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2015 at a time when overall international trade was quite stagnant. E-commerce and other digital applications were helping a growing number of entrepreneurs and small businesses to connect with global markets in the developing world, empowering women, entrepreneurs and traders.

19. The pace of change in ICT was rapid and ever-increasing and its impacts on global economic and social development remained uncertain. New technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics would be applied to a wide variety of sectors and would disrupt business, society and Governments and lead to the restructuring of cities. The impact on the nature of work would be profound and the creation of new markets and jobs through online platforms and the sharing economy was likely. However, the ensuing disruptions to the job market could lead to increased polarization and widening inequality.

20. Digital competencies would be required to take advantage of the new and emerging technologies. UNCTAD was studying that topic and taking practical steps to help developing countries take advantage of increasing digitalization and technological change. It had recently launched rapid assessments of e-commerce readiness for least developed countries and had also launched an initiative called "eTrade for All: Unlocking the Potential of E-Commerce in Developing Countries". UNCTAD called on the international community to expand its support to the digital economy on a massive scale and invited countries to collaborate and share experiences about the benefits and costs of digitalization. ICT would play a cross-cutting role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/72/64-E/2017/12) and its emphasis on inequality in access to ICT between developed and developing countries, particularly regarding sub-Saharan Africa and between genders. Without drastic action within the next decade, Africa and especially its women would be left behind. She wondered what strategies and frameworks had been implemented to support sub-Saharan Africa in gaining better access to ICT. Expressing particular concern for women in rural or remote regions and internally displaced persons in camps, she wondered how such persons would have access to at least a mobile phone when affordability was such a problem.

22. **Ms. Sirimanne** (Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that the digital gap as it pertained to gender was very much a concern despite enormous growth in access to broadband and mobile phones. That gap was much higher in Africa where women were 25 per cent less likely to use the Internet compared with global figures indicating a 12 per cent gender gap. However, many good practices existed in Africa, including small and medium-sized businesses run by women, who were engaged in e-commerce and gaining its full benefits. It would be important to learn from those successful experiences and scale them up across the continent. With regard to access and affordability, she invited the delegate from Nigeria to read the complementary report of UNCTAD, *Information Economy Report 2017: Digitalization, Trade and Development*. Massive investments were required to improve connectivity and rectify other gaps, such as those pertaining to skills and in the legal and regulatory environment in the developing world, if all were to benefit from the technology in future.

23. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

24. **Mr. Zambrano** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that ICTs were powerful drivers of economic growth and key enablers for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/64-E/2017/12) and its highlights related to improvements and challenges.

25. There was a strong need to bridge the digital divide both between and within countries, and between women and men. Ninety per cent of the inhabitants of developed countries had mobile broadband subscriptions, compared with 41 per cent in developing countries and fewer than 20 per cent in least developed countries. In Europe, 84 per cent of households had Internet access at home, a stark contrast with sub-Saharan Africa where only 15 per cent had such home access. Given the rapid pace of technological progress, the figures were alarming and meant that those who had been left behind were becoming even more disadvantaged. The Group underscored the importance of reducing and eliminating digital divides between and within countries and between genders. To achieve that, it would be useful to strengthen enabling policy environments and international cooperation to improve affordability, access, education, capacity-building, multilingualism, cultural preservation, investment and appropriate financing.

26. There was an urgent need to channel effective and sustainable technical assistance and capacity-building tailored to the specific needs and constraints of developing countries. Their ability to sustain healthy levels of growth was hampered by technology

infrastructure gaps and capacity constraints. That was especially true in African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries and peoples under foreign occupation. Many middle-income countries also faced similar serious challenges.

27. The Group wished to underscore the growing importance and contribution of ICT to health, education, knowledge exchange, agricultural development, and the promotion of peace, as well as in responses to the impacts of climate change, early warning systems, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses. Investment in capacity-building and education would enable countries to productively use ICT in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to derive related social and economic gains.

28. The Group attached great importance to the full and effective implementation of the outcomes of both the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society. It was important to strengthen the representation and participation of developing countries in Internet governance, especially in the Internet Governance Forum, to ensure the stability, security and continuity of the Internet.

29. The Group welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and expressed its appreciation to the Government of Turkey for hosting it. The Bank had the potential to foster productive capacity, structural transformation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The Group further welcomed the launch of the Bank during the high-level week of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and supported the request of least developed countries that 0.1 per cent of official development assistance be allocated for least developed countries to the Technology Bank to ensure its sustainability.

30. **Mr. Chandrtri** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/72/64-E/2017/12) and remained committed to the principles enunciated by the World Summit on the Information Society of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society.

31. Both the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda underscored the pivotal role of ICTs in advancing sustainable development. ICTs were important to the successful integration of the ASEAN community and had accelerated socioeconomic development, strengthened connectivity within ASEAN and linked the region to the global community.

32. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint recognized those technologies as a key driver for economic and social transformation and ASEAN was therefore engaged in a process to transform its economy into a digital economy, guided by the ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2020. The latter was aimed at embedding ICT in all sectors of the economy and fostering broad growth and innovation; upgrading hardware, software and networks; enabling every individual and community to be connected; facilitating faster access to services; and creating new and better ways of doing business.

33. ASEAN was addressing the prevailing digital divide with a digital innovation strategy under a broader connectivity plan. Several projects had been initiated to accelerate the development of related technology infrastructure and services in ASEAN member States and to promote an efficient and competitive logistics sector.

34. Digital governance must be strengthened to respond to the growing cyber threat in the region. The inaugural ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity, held in Singapore, and the workshop on strengthening and enhancing cybersecurity cooperation in the ASEAN region, held in Thailand, were concrete steps taken to realize that goal.

35. ASEAN cooperated on ICT with partners outside the region. Concrete examples included the ASEAN-United States ICT Work Plan, ASEAN-Japan ICT partnership programmes and funding, and the ASEAN-China ICT Cooperation Partnership. ASEAN looked forward to furthering such efforts through existing and new partnerships.

36. ASEAN supported other international efforts to develop ICTs, including the Internet Governance Forum, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNCTAD and other relevant agencies of the United Nations. ASEAN also appreciated the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, including the recent study on the state of ICT in Asia and the Pacific and the ongoing Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiative.

37. The progress made on ICTs was positive and ASEAN reiterated its commitment to continue working in its region and with other partners outside the region as well as with the United Nations to achieve a global information society that would benefit all and leave no one behind.

38. Lastly, speaking in his national capacity, he said that Thailand strongly supported the application of ICT to public services in order to enhance access and performance. His Government had introduced

e-government, digital health care and distance learning programmes via satellite to ensure that everyone could access public administrative services as well as quality health care and education regardless of location. His Government had also implemented the Thailand 4.0 policy to transform its economy into a digital and innovative economy, relying on the contribution of ICT to bring exponential growth. Other notable programmes involved expanding ICT infrastructure and broadband access to rural areas with the aim of providing equal access to knowledge and employment opportunities for all.

39. **Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the CARICOM continued to face unique development challenges. As small island developing States, CARICOM members were acutely vulnerable to exogenous shocks in global markets, the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

40. In that context, CARICOM acknowledged that advances in technology and innovation provided greater opportunities for small island developing States to circumvent the inherent limitations of their small size. ICTs were transformative and could accelerate human progress and develop globally connected knowledge spaces to enrich the lives of peoples.

41. Accelerated technological change and the competitive pressures of globalization had expanded the digital divide between the global North and South. As a result, technology and connectivity had acquired greater relevance for developing countries. Any country not equipped with infrastructure, capacity and inclusive access to the most up-to-date innovations and knowledge would be left behind. A robust multilateral response to bridging the digital divides between and within Member States was required.

42. In that regard, CARICOM reiterated its support for the work of the United Nations and ITU, under which the World Summit on the Information Society convened. The Summit remained critical to building a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society that allowed all nations and peoples, particularly the most vulnerable, to be engaged participants in the evolving digital space and information society. Accordingly, CARICOM welcomed the closer alignment of the World Summit and the 2030 Agenda.

43. To take full advantage of the opportunities to spur economic growth and development, CARICOM had increased its focus on ICT. The Caribbean Community was fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and would continue to work with its partners towards the development of an enabling environment for the enhancement of ICTs in the region.

44. In 2014, the Heads of Government of CARICOM States had endorsed the establishment of a Caribbean Single ICT Space to attract investment, harmonize related legislative frameworks, and foster digital production, commerce, entrepreneurship and innovation. The CARICOM Single ICT Space was aligned with the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which strongly supported the creation of national and regional ICT platforms and hubs to enhance ICT penetration in small island developing States. The Heads of Government had also approved the ICT Integrated Work Plan and Budget in 2017 to support indispensable regional development initiatives, cybersecurity and competitiveness. The incorporation of ICT into national development strategies would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

45. In a changing world, those who were able to innovate and create knowledge and technological applications had a competitive advantage. The 2030 Agenda required the transfer of technology, resources and investment to developing countries, especially small island developing States. In that regard, CARICOM welcomed the progress in operationalizing the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to foster technological and innovative solutions for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. CARICOM also acknowledged the discussions that had taken place during the 2017 Science, Technology and Innovation Forum.

46. The dynamic evolution of the ICT sector had brought new security and rights challenges related to cybersecurity and internet governance, among other issues. CARICOM remained committed to the use of ICT for peaceful purposes for all, including marginalized and minority groups. The commitments of the international community in the context of the 2030 Agenda were critical to building a people-centred, inclusive and knowledge-based global society that would enable everyone to participate in the digital era.

47. **Ms. Haque** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, welcomed the Secretary-General's report and said that ICTs were a catalyst for economic growth, productivity, competition and knowledge transfer, and a strong driving force for the empowerment of billions of people. That great potential was acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda, whose target 9.C set an ambitious benchmark to provide universal and affordable Internet access in least developed countries by 2020. However, the current

situation in those countries was not encouraging. The majority of the least connected countries were also the least developed ones and the digital divide between developed and developing countries was increasing. Less than half of humanity had Internet access and in least developed countries that figure was less than 10 per cent. The cost of access in those countries was also higher in relation to average household income, resulting in a lack of affordable access to ICT and the hampering of e-commerce.

48. A gender digital divide also persisted in least developed countries, where the proportion of women using the Internet was 31 per cent lower than the proportion of men. There was also an urban-rural divide. Moreover, market forces had led to ICT innovations being designed to meet the needs of the developed world. To harness the maximum benefits of ICTs for all, her delegation recommended a number of specific measures in least developed countries.

49. First, countries must adopt appropriate policies and strategies and create modern infrastructure and service delivery systems to ensure the availability, affordability and accessibility of ICTs. Second, appropriate training and education was vital, and more efforts should be made towards strengthening capacity-building in cybersecurity. Third, the full participation of women in the information society and their access to ICTs for development must be ensured. Fourth, appropriate technologies and relevant know-how were needed to adapt and commercialize ICTs to local needs and circumstances. In that regard, all development partners were urged to generously contribute to the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. Fifth, adequate financial support was needed to build ICT networks, especially broadband networks, and to acquire tools, hardware and software for modern equipment and facilities. Sixth, more robust international cooperation was required for the least developed countries to address their ICT challenges. South-South and triangular cooperation could be useful in that regard and concrete initiatives among countries in the South should be encouraged for the exchange of innovation, experiences, lessons learned and best practices.

50. Lastly, development partners had made concrete commitments in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 to continue providing places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, particularly in the fields of science, technology, business management and economics. That commitment was set forth in target 4.B of the 2030 Agenda and her delegation wished to see significant progress in its realization.

51. **Ms. Naeem** (Maldives), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the progress made on ICTs for development. However, future reports should specifically address the special circumstances of small island developing States and enhance knowledge about the current state of ICTs in those States.

52. ICTs for development were an important topic for AOSIS, as evidenced by its active participation in the agenda item under consideration and in the 10-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society. AOSIS countries were facing development challenges and communications barriers caused by geographical factors. Consequently, their need to advance in ICTs was immense.

53. AOSIS was grateful for the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, for the holding of the second multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and for the progress made in the implementation of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism as a whole. Nevertheless, it remained concerned about progress in the operationalization of the online platform for the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and called for its speedy and full implementation.

54. ICTs were key to supporting measures and policies in all phases of development and presented tremendous opportunities for transformative change in such areas as disaster risk management, health care, e-governance, financial services and natural resource management. However, the pace of the propagation of ICTs and their effect on societies had created digital divides that exacerbated inequality between and within countries. Coordinated and informed policies were needed to increase equitable access to and use of ICTs.

55. ICT played an important role in disaster risk management and presented an unprecedented opportunity for island States to address enduring challenges. For ICT to be effectively deployed, updated data and statistics were required before, during and after disasters. AOSIS called for enhanced support and technical assistance from the international community to help small island developing States strengthen institutions for domestic data collection and analysis.

56. ICT could also promote financial inclusion and access to financial services for small island developing States. Their isolation, dispersed populations, high levels of poverty and extremely high transaction costs were among the barriers to financial inclusion. Efficient payment systems and safe savings and credit institutions for rural populations were virtually absent. However,

mobile telephony and broadband services had progressed considerably. Linking financial services with communications technologies could help Governments provide access to those critical services, facilitate access to credit for rural populations and enable the diaspora to easily remit money. With support for science, technology and innovation, ICT could truly revolutionize development discourse.

57. **Mr. Dasgupta** (India) said that scientific progress in the twentieth century had led to current powerful technologies, including ICTs. The power of digital data, social media, big data analytics and the Internet of things was transforming society, industries, business, human interactions and Government. With those transformations came new concerns about cybersecurity, cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, the privacy of personal data, and social and economic problems resulting from technological shifts.

58. Technology was neutral but access to its benefits was not. ICT had tremendous power to improve governance and make development more inclusive and participatory, although digital divides could increase inequality. The Digital India Programme, which aimed to bridge the digital divide and empower vulnerable and remote populations, focused on enhancing Internet and mobile connectivity and access, e-governance and e-services, information for all, electronic manufacturing and information technology for jobs. ICT was also being used for disaster preparedness and early warning and for improving efficiency in transportation and logistics.

59. The use of ICT to promote financial inclusion had been remarkably successful. More than 1 billion citizens of India had been issued biometric identity cards, which had enabled government savings of more than $9 billion through the elimination of leaks and duplications. More than 300 million new bank accounts had been opened for vulnerable populations. The linking of biometric cards with bank accounts and mobile phones was promoting efficient and transparent access to a host of e-services, including financial services such as credit, insurance, pensions and remittances. Tax compliance had increased exponentially, providing increased government revenues to pay for infrastructure development and welfare.

60. ICTs were also being used for infrastructure and land registry management, financial and public institution data, welfare programmes and online access to civil status documents and forms. India continued to work with fellow developing countries on capacity-building in the use of ICTs for development. India remained committed to building on the synergies between the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in order to strengthen global development partnerships through the power of ICTs.

61. **Ms. Ponce** (Philippines) said that her delegation shared concerns about the continuing digital divide between regions, countries and people. Despite increases in ICT infrastructure and service coverage, her country continued to fall behind in terms of affordability, availability and Internet speed. The Philippines was also lagging behind in terms of fixed and mobile broadband penetration and in percentages of households and individuals with Internet. It was clear that faster and cheaper Internet was required.

62. To address those challenges, the Philippines had incorporated increased collaborative research and development and had scaled up investment in ICT infrastructure in its national development plan. The newly-created Department of Information and Communications Technology was developing a national broadband plan to accelerate the deployment of fibre-optic cables and wireless technologies to improve Internet speeds. The national broadband plan would address gaps in accessibility, affordability and quality of services as well as policy and regulatory barriers to the deployment of related infrastructure. It would establish measures to engage public and private stakeholders in order to achieve universal, fast, reliable and affordable broadband access.

63. **Mr. Guo** (Singapore) said that the fourth industrial revolution, the Internet of things and artificial intelligence were some of the new technologies evoking excitement and stimulating entrepreneurship while also causing anxiety in workers, who feared they would be supplanted by machines. Digital technologies continued to transform the nature of work and posed both challenges and opportunities for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth.

64. To reap the benefits of digitalization, companies, industries and workers must embrace new technologies, processes and skills. Governments needed to actively foster an enabling environment to prepare businesses and workers for the future. That would entail the creation of frameworks and regulations to nurture the emergence of new ideas and players while giving established actors a fair chance to adapt and compete. Appropriate regulatory frameworks would maintain the ability of traditional businesses to compete and would ensure high standards of safety and service.

65. Training and education would also be important to ensure that workers had the skills and confidence to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The SkillsFuture programme in Singapore was fully supported by employers and unions. That support was critical because the Government could not succeed alone in assisting displaced workers to adapt to a changing job market. Most important however was investment in education, especially in the early years of childhood, to prepare children with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in an ever-evolving workplace.

66. Governments must also actively support industries and businesses to transform. The right environment, institutions and programmes could help companies enter new markets and develop new technologies. His Government had introduced a new Go Digital Programme in 2017 for small and medium enterprises to build digital capabilities and adapt to disruptive change. Singapore was striving to become a smart nation to support better living, stronger communities and more opportunities for all. The measure of that intelligence was how well technology was used to solve problems and address existential challenges for the benefit of the people. Singapore was taking an active role to ensure that digitalization helped to improve quality of life, increase the efficacy of enterprise, and generate opportunities to ensure that no one was left behind.

67. **Mr. Alikhani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that ICT had great potential to increase prosperity, enhance productivity and foster innovation in the service of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, as the Secretary-General's report showed, the digital divide persisted, both among and within countries. For developing States and the majority of the poor, the promise of better access to ICT remained unfulfilled. Education, capacity-building and especially technology transfer were needed to fill that gap. States should refrain from measures that restricted such transfer or limited investments in infrastructure.

68. The Islamic Republic of Iran had implemented policies to narrow the digital divide at the national level. As part of his country's Sixth Development Plan, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology had redoubled the attention paid to infrastructure in anticipation of expanded electronic services in banking, commerce and health that were projected to account for one fifth of new job opportunities. ICT investment by the private sector was expected to quadruple that by the Government in the current year, as young people and a new generation of entrepreneurs shaped the economic future by harnessing the potential of ICT.

69. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that progress had been made in connectivity, innovation and access to ICT since the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, especially regarding rapid growth in fixed and mobile broadband. However, the benefits were not equally shared and significant digital divides remained, especially in least developed countries.

70. Those deep inequalities were a result of an unjust global development model that prevented developing countries from having full access to and enjoyment of vital technologies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The resources were available globally to bridge the digital divide and ensure equal access for all to those technologies. However, political will was required from developed countries with regard to financing, investment, training, the creation of infrastructure, knowledge sharing and transfer of intellectual property and technology.

71. ICT should be used to enhance the capacity of peoples to achieve economic and social development and to promote peace and knowledge, and eradicate poverty, illiteracy and social exclusion in keeping with the United Nations Charter and international law. ICT must never be used to promote war, interventionism, destabilization, subversion, and unilateral or terrorist actions. It was essential to establish a new world order for ICT so that developing countries could successfully meet the commitments agreed at the World Summit on the Information Society and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

72. Cuba was extremely concerned about the clandestine and illegal use by individuals, organizations and States of the computer systems of other nations to attack third countries, because of the potential for such actions to cause international conflicts. Cyberspace and Internet access must be considered as common and strategic resources for all humanity. Governance of the Internet must be international, democratic, participatory and based on international law and multilateralism in order to achieve a peaceful, safe, open and cooperative cyberspace that contributed to the sustainable development of peoples.

73. Cuba was working to integrate ICT into society and to extend Internet use in the service of all despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States. Since 2016, the ICT sector in Cuba had posted losses of almost $69 million. The implementation of unilateral coercive measures by some Member States against developing countries prevented them from gaining universal access to the benefits of ICT.

74. Cuba remained committed to combating inequality, underdevelopment, discrimination and manipulation and to the establishment of a more just and equitable international order focusing on dignity and well-being.

75. **Ms. Silalahi** (Indonesia) said that ICT could be an enabler for all three pillars of sustainable development. However, the persistence of the digital divide was troubling. There were four times as many mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people in developed countries as in least developed countries. Nearly 9 out of 10 young people not connected to the Internet lived in Africa or the Asia and the Pacific region. Only 15 per cent of households in least developed countries had Internet access. That was not to mention the digital gender divide. ICT policy should be aimed at reaping the digital dividend, not perpetuating the digital divide.

76. Under its National Medium-Term Development Plan 2015–2019, Indonesia planned to increase ICT connectivity by expanding broadband services to all of its islands and to meet 100 per cent of its universal service obligation by 2019. Her country's E-Commerce Roadmap envisaged Indonesia as the largest digital economy in Southeast Asia by 2020, with 1,000 new "technopreneurs" and a $130 billion increase in e-commerce transactions. International cooperation on capacity-building, technology transfer and investment in ICT infrastructure was particularly useful for archipelagic countries and small island developing States, notably for disseminating weather data as part of disaster early warning and mitigation.

77. While ICT offered the potential for enormous benefits, it could also be subject to abuses that threatened security and development. Best practices should be exchanged and good ICT governance promoted through the Internet Governance Forum.

78. **Ms. Al Awadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had adopted numerous policies to foster innovation as part of its Vision 2021, which was timed to coincide with the country's golden jubilee. The United Arab Emirates was the highest ranking Arab State on the World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index. Statistics from ITU showed that the United Arab Emirates was a regional and global leader in Internet connectivity and ICT, and had gone a long way towards bridging the digital gender divide.

79. The Government of the United Arab Emirates had recognized early on the importance of electronic space as a platform for diplomacy, dialogue and the fourth industrial revolution. Most of the members of the Council of Ministers had websites, and government institutions had a strong presence on the Internet. The private sector and cultural institutions also made use of the Internet to maintain contact with entrepreneurs and investors. Mindful that it was in a race against time to maintain its competitiveness, her country had established the United Arab Emirates Fourth Industrial Revolution Council, with a view to investing in the knowledge economy that would eventually replace the oil economy. Her country was also becoming a trailblazer in the "techplomacy" of the future.

80. The United Arab Emirates recognized the need for collective action to combat cyberterrorism. In May 2017, it had hosted the International Conference on the Criminalization of Cyberterrorism, which had adopted the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Criminalization of Cyberterrorism. The Abu Dhabi-based Sawab Centre was working to expose erroneous religious concepts including through its recent campaign on the treachery of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The campaign focused on the damage done by ISIL to families and society as a whole, and emphasized the role that women and young people could play in countering it. Along with Latvia, the United Arab Emirates had co-hosted the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2015, which had addressed the role of Governments, the private sector and civil society in creating the Internet's future, which should be based on multilateral cooperation to establish agreed-upon laws and principles.

81. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) said that the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda had both recognized the potential of ICT to stimulate economic growth and sustainable development. It was important to create an enabling environment for ICT that spread benefits to all segments of society, and especially women, young people and children. His country had invested heavily in the ICT sector. Its Ministry of Information and Communications Technology conducted an annual study to help measure progress and formulate policy. The Qatar Science and Technology Park established by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development supported the spirit of innovation, while the Qatar Assistive Technology Center made technology available to persons with disabilities. The policies of Qatar had made it a world ICT leader according to the World Economic Forum's 2016 Global Information Technology Report, which had ranked the country third globally in the "Laws relating to ICTs" category.

82. Cybercrime was a major threat to global peace and security, and countries that were its victims should have recourse to rights under international law. His country had been a victim of electronic piracy that had been used to create a pretext for the imposition of illegal unilateral

measures. The international community should stand firm against such violations.

83. **Mr. Zahir** (Maldives) said that as a small State made up of over 1,000 islands in a remote part of the Indian Ocean, his country gave great priority to harnessing ICTs for development. The dispersed nature of the Maldivian population made the cost of service delivery up to five times higher than in other small island development States.

84. His Government had put in place a number of projects to leverage the transformative powers of ICT through better awareness and capacity-building. It had also created an enabling environment for the private sector to provide more widespread and affordable access. The Maldives currently had 100 per cent telecommunications and Internet coverage across its inhabited islands. Mobile banking projects allowed for greater financial inclusion for remote communities. A majority of fishing vessels used Global Positioning System tracking, and streamlined and eco-friendly services in the tourism sector had contributed to developing a low-carbon economy. ICT was being used by the education system to enable distance learning, and improved access to media had facilitated grass-roots engagement with the Government's sustainable development policies.

85. He reiterated his delegation's call for capacity-building and technology transfer on concessional terms based on countries' circumstances.

86. **Mr. Alqarni** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had recognized early on the potential of ICT to develop industry, attract investment and improve competitiveness. His country's Vision 2030 included programmes to expand high-speed broadband coverage in cities and beyond in conjunction with the private sector. A National Committee for Digital Transformation had been established to oversee what was becoming one of the largest ICT markets in the region, valued at $35 billion in 2016, an 8 per cent increase over the previous year.

87. God had blessed Saudi Arabia with the privilege of administering the Hajj pilgrimage, which, in 2017, had featured one of the most massive ICT infrastructures ever built, with mobile phone capacity for 75 million users and thousands of ICT specialists working round the clock to ensure no service interruptions. Some 700 million calls had been placed in seven days with a 99 per cent success rate. ITU had specially commended the Kingdom for the services it had provided to the Guests of the Merciful.

88. As the digital economy, smart cities and artificial intelligence became ever more prominent features of modern life, security concerns were inevitable. Data must be protected and developing States must be provided with assistance in accordance with the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

89. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that his delegation wished to stress the importance of bridging the digital divide so that all of humankind could enjoy the benefits offered by ICT. As with any technological transformation, those benefits were not being spread evenly, with poor countries in Africa in particular unable to reap the full potential of globalization. The United Nations and other development actors should take steps to correct technology gaps.

90. Cybersecurity was becoming an increasing concern. He commended the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security for its efforts to create cyberspace norms that were in line with existing international law and the Charter of the United Nations. He stressed that the fact that the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime had originated as a regional instrument should not preclude its universal adoption. ICT had the potential to improve millions of lives by enhancing delivery of financial, educational, government and health services.

91. **Mr. Andambi** (Kenya) said that the Secretary-General's report highlighted the cross-cutting role that ICT would play in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. While welcoming the annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, he stressed that most developing countries continued to lag behind in ICT connectivity and access and called for expedited operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries along the lines provided for in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

92. His Government was investing in ICT with a view to increasing productivity and competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy. Most government services in his country were available through ICT platforms, with all 47 counties connected to a fibre-optic network, which helped to reduce costs and expand access. One of the country's Vision 2030 flagship programmes was the Konza Technopolis, which would serve as an ICT hub. The KENET education network provided Internet infrastructure to universities across the country. Collaboration between the mobile phone industry and the banking sector had resulted in widespread use of new products such as the M-PESA mobile payment

system, and had made Kenya a global leader in mobile banking.

93. **Mr. Chhetri** (Nepal) said that his delegation shared the concerns about uneven ICT access, cybercrime and Internet governance expressed in the Secretary-General's report. Rapid ICT advances offered huge potential benefits for developing countries, and countries in special situations in particular. The provision of universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020 had been set as a target under Sustainable Development Goal 9, and operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries would be of crucial importance in that respect.

94. The outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society had highlighted the need for synergies between ICT innovations and the 2030 Agenda. In particular, ICT could be a game changer for landlocked least developed countries like his own by opening up access to world markets and creating new investment and business opportunities. Strategies to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility should bear in mind the special circumstances of landlocked and island countries.

95. The 2015 earthquake in Nepal had highlighted the potential of ICT to minimize the impacts of disasters through the type of ICT-enabled early warning, rescue and recovery systems envisioned by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society was people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented. Governments and other stakeholders should collaborate to bridge the digital divide and create an enabling environment for ICT that stressed capacity-building, took into account cultural and linguistic diversity, and focused on the neediest.

96. **Mr. Liu** Jun (China) said that there was a need to focus on using ICT to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and global levels. His delegation supported operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. Efforts should be stepped up to bridge the digital divide between countries and regions, as well as between the genders. Developing countries should be provided with capacity-building to ensure that they had equal access to the development benefits of ICT. North-South and South-South partnerships should be strengthened to promote knowledge sharing and technology transfer. His Government had put forward a national ICT strategy and an international strategy for cooperation on cyberspace, and was focused on using

ICT to reduce poverty and narrow the digital divide between urban and rural areas.

97. **Mr. Yekple** (Togo) said that science, technology and innovation had been crucial to global growth over the previous few decades. In particular, ICT and broadband Internet had enormous potential to contribute to enhancing competitiveness, reducing poverty and integrating developing and least developed countries into the global economy. Science, technology and innovation had an important role to play in progress on climate change, food security, access to water, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction and sustainable production and consumption. However, the digital divide posed obstacles to inclusive realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Infrastructure, access and affordability needed to be improved through solutions that were mindful of local specificities and the needs of vulnerable groups.

98. His country stressed science, technology and innovation in its development plans, focusing particularly on expanding the electrical grid and diversifying energy sources. His Government's Cizo project aimed to provide millions of people with electricity over the next five years through individual solar kits, and had recently reached an agreement with the British company BBoxx to provide 300,000 home solar energy systems. Togo was also implementing projects in the telecommunications sector that would extend the benefits of the mobile network to previously underserved groups, including the AgriPME project, which used farmers' cellular phones as a sort of "electronic wallet" for government assistance. His Government had reduced taxes on computer hardware and mobile devices and had plans to expand the reach and increase the affordability of broadband, especially in the light of the growing displacement of traditional voice communication by social networks. He welcomed the recent decision by the Economic Community of West African States to provide free roaming for mobile telephone users.

99. **Mr. Fox-Drummond Gough** (Brazil) said that the 2030 Agenda had highlighted the role of ICT as a cross-cutting element with the potential to foster economic growth, social inclusion and environment-friendly solutions. For that potential to benefit all, it would be crucial to step up efforts to bridge the digital divide between and within countries, and between the genders. His delegation supported the Technology Facilitation Mechanism as a tool for correcting imbalances in access.

100. His country supported broad inclusiveness in discussions of all Internet-related issues, while taking

into account the differentiated roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. It welcomed progress achieved within the Internet Governance Forum established by the World Summit on the Information Society, supported enhanced cooperation as envisioned by the outcome of that Summit's 10-year review, and commended the work of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

101. The technological advances that were spurring what was often referred to as the fourth industrial revolution came with new challenges in the areas of employment, regulation, taxation, privacy and ethics. Developing countries faced additional problems of access and participation. Discussions of such issues should be mindful in particular of Sustainable Development Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries, and should reinforce existing mechanisms such as the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts.

102. **Ms. Mendoza Elguea** (Mexico) said that the world had experienced exponential acceleration in many fields of research. The rapid pace of change had brought both opportunities and challenges to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. While technology change was exponential, change in the related legal and institutional frameworks was linear. States must therefore strengthen their public policies to respond in a more agile manner to both the challenges and opportunities of the fourth technological revolution. The effects of that revolution had been uneven both domestically and internationally, in some cases leading to widening inequality and in others closing the gap.

103. Technological advances had certainly brought significant benefits for peoples, the economy and social development. Significant progress in health and agriculture had been achieved, both strategic areas for improving quality of life and social well-being. However, technological progress had caused job displacement and unemployment. More than 1 billion jobs had been automated and it was expected that by 2030 that number would double. Inappropriate use of new technology could also lead to serious social problems.

104. The world was entering its most disruptive period in history. Unlike the impacts of other great upheavals, the effects of the current disruptive transformation were immediate, profound and increasingly irreversible. With that in mind, Mexico had hosted the Expert Group Meeting on Exponential Technological Change, Automation, and Their Policy Implications for Sustainable Development in 2016. At the regional level, a special session was held in Mexico City on artificial intelligence during the first Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development in 2017. Her country also welcomed the side events organized by the Committee during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on the role of technological change and innovation, which should be the beginning of a broader discussion on exponential technological change within the United Nations.

105. **Ms. Alabdulmohsen** (Bahrain) said that in the 2016 United Nations e-Government Survey, Bahrain had ranked first in e-government readiness in the Arab world for the fourth time since 2010, and had made it into the "very high" category of the E-Government Development Index for the second year running. One improvement of note was that Bahrain had jumped from number 26 to number 11 on the Telecommunications Infrastructure Index, which measured Internet connectivity and broadband coverage.

106. In 2015, her country had received the ITU Information and Communication Technology in Sustainable Development award. In September 2017, the Kingdom had hosted a "technology week", and its capital Manama had been chosen by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as headquarters for a Regional Centre for Information and Communication Technology. Amazon Web Services had just announced that Bahrain would be the first country in the Middle East and North Africa Region to host one of that company's "infrastructure zones". By attracting such global corporations, the Kingdom would serve as a regional gateway for cloud computing, while creating an enabling environment for innovation at the national level.

107. **Mr. Kalsakau** (Vanuatu) said that his country had prioritized ICT infrastructure as part of its national sustainable development plan. Since 2008, when the telecommunications market of Vanuatu had been opened to competition, connectivity had jumped from 15 per cent to over 90 per cent across its 83 islands. ICT was contributing to a vast array of sectors, including education, health, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, e-governance and tourism, thereby promoting entrepreneurship, creating jobs and transforming people's livelihoods.

108. Nevertheless, as a small island developing State, Vanuatu was on the wrong end of the digital divide. Broadband access was limited, particularly in rural areas in developing countries. His Government supported the

ITU Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development. Vanuatu and many other developing countries needed support from both the public and private sectors to foster universal and affordable access to ICT.

109. **Ms. Matjila** (South Africa) said that the spread of ICT meant that more people than ever before had access to Internet and mobile telephone service. However, the figures in the Secretary-General's report testified to the persistence of the global digital divide. Developing and least developed countries in particular lagged behind in access to broadband networks. The African continent remained the least connected region, and was in need of investment, technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity-building tailored to the specific needs of each country.

110. **Mr. Kulikov** (Russian Federation), welcoming the report of the Secretary-General, said that the Sustainable Development Goals were closely linked to World Summit processes. Indeed, the matrix developed by United Nations system bodies at the World Summit on the Information Society Forum in 2015 showed the direct linkages between the Summit's actions lines and the respective Goals.

111. While ICTs provided clear opportunities to facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, digital divides remained a significant constraint. Fully harnessing the potential of ICTs would therefore require high-quality, secure and affordable access to information and knowledge, which entailed the building of smart cities with modern infrastructure, the integration of e-government and other innovative measures.

112. ITU played a valuable role in promoting the innovative development of ICTs and helping developing countries build their capacities to bridge the digital divide. As widening broadband connectivity was a crucial element in that regard, his delegation particularly wished to commend ITU for its Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development.

113. For its part, Russia was successfully implementing a plan to expand broadband access nationwide. Despite the size and geographical diversity of the country, mobile access broadband services there remained some of the cheapest in the world. For example, the average cost for mobile network services in Russia was around $4 per month, and there were plans to significantly reduce that figure still further. Currently some 26 million residents had access to broadband services in Russia.

114. His Government recognized that ICTs were necessary tools for the promotion of economic growth in developing countries and, in the context of the joint efforts of Russia with Brazil, India, China and South Africa, intended to promote cooperation for the benefit of all societies, including in such areas as the Internet of things, big data, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and fifth generation mobile networks.

115. Governments should promote the gradual develop of ICTs not only by building effective partnerships among those working in the telecommunications markets but also by creating a favourable environment to attract investment and expand market access. At the same time, the international community must consistently cooperate to address the many new information security challenges that had arisen owing to the swift development of ICTs, particularly their use for criminal and terrorist purposes.

116. **Mr. Bolaji** (Nigeria) said that the concept of ICTs for development was grounded in the aspiration that technology should help to deliver a greater good, which might be called "digital development". Over the previous decade, ICT access had increased dramatically in Africa, allowing for the delivery of services to previously underserved populations and stimulating productivity and innovation. Capacity-building for the use of such technology should be a prominent part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was essential to promote universal and affordable access, and to meet the highest global ICT standards, with a goal of increasing active mobile broadband subscription to 50 per cent by 2020.

117. Global disparities in ICT access had been recognized as a major cause of exclusion from global markets. If the gaps between information "haves and have nots" were not bridged, efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals would be akin to chasing a shadow. The digital divide between rural and urban areas was a global phenomenon, while the digital divide among countries closely paralleled North-South imbalances. His delegation called for digital inclusion through expanding networks and lowering costs. Sociodemographic obstacles to access had implications not only for economic imbalances, but for the future of democracy. ICT could also play a role in combating illicit financial flows and facilitating asset recovery.

118. **Mr. Simon** (Ethiopia) said that more than 800 million people in least developed countries were not online, and Africa remained the least connected continent. Such imbalances highlighted the need for international cooperation to ensure that the benefits of ICTs were fully harnessed in the service of sustainable

development. Public-private partnerships would be crucial, as would technology transfer and capacity-building in line with the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

119. His country's ICT strategy was geared towards poverty reduction and economic growth. ICTs were being used to boost agricultural production, expand education and health facilities, and improve service delivery. The new ICT park in Addis Ababa was attracting domestic and foreign investment. ICT community centres recently opened in rural areas not only broadened access, but also created employment opportunities for young people.

120. Like other least developed countries, Ethiopia was mindful that the full potential of ICTs for sustainable development could only be realized if costs were significantly reduced. The digital divide should be addressed by international partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaboration. In that regard, he welcomed the support provided to developing countries by UNCTAD.

121. **Ms. Wynhoven** (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that ITU had recently issued a report, *Fast-forward progress: Leveraging tech to achieve the global goals*, which included contributions from the leaders of 17 United Nations entities. Leaving no one behind meant leaving no one offline; unless the Goal 9 target of universal and affordable access to the Internet was reached, the digital divide would become a digital chasm. The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development had identified the key reasons why almost 4 billion people remained unconnected as a lack of infrastructure, digital skills and digital content as well as non-affordability. The Commission's Education Working Group had just published a report on digital skills for life and work. In partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), ITU had launched the "Equal" initiative to help bridge the digital gender divide.

122. One category that was becoming increasing connected was objects. Developments in big data, sensor networks, autonomous robots, machine learning and artificial intelligence were raising new questions that had been addressed at the Artificial Intelligence for Good Global Summit recently convened by ITU. A people-centred approach meant ensuring that members of vulnerable groups had the same rights online as they had offline. Contributors to the abovementioned report had called for vigilance to ensure that the benefits of ICT were not confined to the privileged few. She stressed the need for more innovative partnerships, especially with business, to harness ICT in support of the development agenda.

123. **Mr. Corell** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the dialogue entitled "The Future of Work We Want", held at ILO headquarters in 2017, had highlighted the impacts that the digital economy, innovation, artificial intelligence, robotization and three-dimensional printing would have on jobs and the skills needed to perform them. The digital transformation held enormous promise for the two out of every five young persons who were either unemployed or working but living in poverty. The ILO Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth had brought together 22 United Nations entities in an effort to expand country-level action towards the Sustainable Development Goal targets related to youth employment. One priority area was digital skills for youth, which ILO was working with ITU to promote through their joint Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth campaign launched at the 2017 World Summit on the Information Society Forum in Geneva. That campaign had set the goals of mobilizing investments to equip 5 million young people with digital skills by 2030 and promoting an enabling environment for young women and men to translate their entrepreneurial spirit into viable and sustainable businesses in the digital economy.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.