<p style="text-align:center">WSIS Forum 2018</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Leveraging ICTs to Build Information and Knowledge Societies for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p>

The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Forum, which is an annual global multi-stakeholder platform, came into existence in 2009 to facilitate the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines for advancing sustainable development, which covers areas such as access to information, capacity building, security and trust in the use of ICTs, and cultural diversity. It is co-organized by the ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD, in collaboration with many other UN entities. The Forum provides an opportunity for information exchange, knowledge creation and sharing of best practices, while identifying emerging trends and fostering partnerships, taking into account the evolving Information and Knowledge Societies.

The WSIS Forum 2018 that took place from 19-23 March 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland, attracted more than 2800 WSIS Stakeholders from more than 150 countries. Thousands followed remotely while more than 500 were engaged by intervening remotely. More than 500 high-level representatives of the wider WSIS Stakeholder community graced the Forum with more than 85 ministers and deputies (29), several ambassadors, CEOs and Civil Society leaders contributing passionately towards the programme of the Forum. More than 250 content rich workshops and open space talks clearly aligned with the WSIS Action Lines and SDGs.

The WSIS Forum 2018 was chaired by H.E. Eng. Majed Sultan Al Mesmar, Deputy Director General, Telecommunication Sector, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), United Arab Emirates, who played a key role in providing high-level guidance for the Forum's outcomes. Policy sessions were moderated by 14 high-level track facilitators and grouped around different themes identified as important by the WSIS Stakeholders during the open consultation process.

The debate on new technologies has become an integral part of the wider digital policy discussion. The developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and big data are happening at a fast past, bringing economic, security, legal, and ethical considerations into sharper focus. WSIS Forum 2018 reconfirmed that digital developments do not happen in a vacuum. The discussion on how to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) was influenced by the fast developments of new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data, and the growing political and policy relevance of digital developments. Two major trends emerged from the discussions at the forum.

The first trend is that there is less and less difference between development and the wider digital policy discussion. This trend is triggered by new technologies which open broader economic, security, legal, and ethical considerations for both developed and developing countries. The trend actually emerged last year with discussion on how the Internet of Things (IoT) and big data can be harnessed to realize the SDGs, and how developing countries – and not only the most

developed – can take advantage. This year, the discussion intensified. From the impact of automation on jobs, to the risks associated with AI systems making decisions on their own, stakeholders are now looking at how new technologies are generating new economies, businesses, and jobs.

The second trend is that issues which were traditionally on the outer margins of WSIS discussions have moved to the center. Many sessions at the WSIS Forum focused on cyber-security, privacy, and e-commerce, and their links to sustainable development. The WSIS Forum 2018 tackled a broader spectrum of issues, compared to the previous Forums.

A number of important issues were discussed during the WSIS Forum Week – including Development Issues (digital inclusion and bridging the digital divide were regarded as crucial for achieving the SDGs by harnessing the power of technology); Infrastructure Issues (high-quality and resilient telecommunications infrastructures are the backbone of digitalization, and AI is here to stay and we have to find ways to embrace its potential for good); Economic Issues (the development of inclusive integrated policy frameworks can increase efficiency by encompassing transversal issues such as digital security, policy design, and strategic foresight); Socio-cultural Issues (digital divide is much more about content, about ethics; it is about the political will to fill this divide with constructive proposals); Security Issues (sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development); and Legal Issues (rise in cybercrime and the need for a harmonized approach to cyber-law based on common globally accepted minimal principles, and that rapid technological changes should not exacerbate the digital divides or create new divides).