ITU Statement for the STI Forum 2024 Briefing to Member States and Stakeholders
5 March 2024, 3:00pm-4:00pm, ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York
Delivered by Ursula Wynhoven, Director and Representative to the United Nations, ITU NY

Moderator,
Co-chairs,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,

Good afternoon. Firstly, we would like to join others in congratulating the co-chairs of the STI Forum 2024 on their appointment, the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the UN, Her Excellency Christina Markus Lassen, and the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the UN, Her Excellency Inga Rhonda King.

ITU has been a longstanding collaborator in the STI Forum since its inception, and we are looking forward to contributing to this year's proceedings. We are an active member of the Inter-Agency Task Team on STI. Within our capacity as one of the co-chairs of the IATT workstream on Gender and STI, we are looking forward to working with DESA and WIPO to support the preparations of the thematic session on advancing sustainable development with women-centered science and technology solutions. We believe that closing gender gaps in STI, including addressing the gender digital divide, is a key multiplier for accelerating sustainable development.

We are also pleased to share that we are working on a side event in collaboration with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), with a focus on the AI divide facing developing countries and how to overcome it.

To be part of the AI revolution, it is necessary to be part of the digital revolution. With, approximately 2.6 billion people still offline globally and many more without affordable, reliable access to the internet, the digital divide continues to disproportionately impact rural, remote, and less developed areas, including LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. Universal meaningful connectivity is a key goal in all ITU initiatives. As the UN specialized agency for digital technologies, ITU is committed to harness the potential of STI, in particular digital and emerging technologies, to help Member States achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the SDG Acceleration Agenda released last September by ITU and UNDP, in collaboration with many other UN agencies, game-changing digital solutions can accelerate progress in 70% of the SDG targets.

To conclude, we wish to bring your attention to two additional important events complementary to the STI Forum: first, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum high-level event, set to take place from the 27th to the 31st of May 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. This event will be co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD, and be co-hosted by ITU and the Swiss Confederation. Second, the AI for Good Summit co-organized by ITU and 40 UN agencies and co-convened with the Government of Switzerland is scheduled for the 30th and 31st of May 2024, also in Geneva and includes a zero day on AI governance good practices.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that yesterday we published a dedicated [ITU *Facts and Figures, SIDS versio*](#)n in preparation for the SIDS4 conference in May in Antigua and Barbuda.   This data-driven report can serve as a useful tool in guiding the global community to support SIDS

countries in harnessing the power of digital technologies for sustainable development. An LLDC version is coming soon for LLDC3.

Thank you.