Special event: Digital Cooperation in the Decade of Action

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

My name is Camila Ramirez, I am honored to be speaking on behalf of the Major Group for Children and Youth.

While the current pandemic has hastened the rapid development of digital technologies in many regions, the adoption of these tools has not been equal across nations, and there are still numerous barriers that exacerbate the digital divide.

We would like to share few recommendations to address these challenges:

First, progress towards the SDGs will require global governance of digital technologies and multilateral cooperation. With the recent establishment of the **Roadmap on Digital Cooperation** and other initiatives such as the **High-level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation and Connectivity**, there needs to be a more critical and urgent dialogue, as well as policies, to ensure that digital tools serve as public goods that benefit people everywhere, not tools that justify further concentration of data and consolidation of power in the hands of a few.

Second, bridging the digital divide requires closing the gender divide. The reasons for the gender digital divide often vary by culture, and therefore local assessments and context-specific solutions are required to close the gender gap. Capacity building of digital literacy and skills, particularly for women and girls, should be prioritized.

Third, broader stakeholder involvement is needed to ensure that digital technologies safeguard the rights and freedoms of all. We are encouraged by the ITU's launch of **Generation Connect.** The creation of more spaces like this where youth are involved in setting the programming priorities and standards would help bridge age divides and ensure greater inclusion in digital spaces.

Fourth, during the development of emerging digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, long and short-term assessments of ethical, social, and environmental impacts are essential to avoid technology lock-in. Technology assessments or frameworks should be utilized throughout the design and development process to ensure that AI and other emerging technologies do not further increase inequalities.

Lastly, open knowledge and open science must be prioritized to recover globally from the COVID-19 pandemic considered as an important tool for capacity building and digital inclusion. We are encouraged by the renewed focus on **2030 Connect** as a virtual "knowledge hub" to share STI best practices and new technologies, and innovations. The continued development of 2030 Connect should build on a broad range of knowledge sources, including formal, informal, indigenous, and traditional knowledge.

Thank you.