



**Opening remarks by the  
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

**Presented by**

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UNHQ**

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Thank you, Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, All,

ITU is honoured to collaborate on this Partnership Forum side event with St Vincent and the Grenadines and UNDESA.

Partnership is part of our DNA with our unique membership of 193 Member States and over 900 sector members from business, academia, technical community and civil society.

Partnership is also critical to close digital divides and to leverage sustainable and inclusive digital technologies to accelerate progress on the SDGs. However, a disproportionate number of the 2.6 billion people still offline are in SIDS. These gaps will not close on their own. To be part of the AI revolution, it is key to be part of the digital revolution and partnerships are key to that. We see three critical areas:

**The first is achieving universal and meaningful connectivity** - the possibility for everyone to enjoy a safe, satisfying, enriching, productive, and affordable online experience – with the potential for digital entrepreneurship and job creation, and the diversification of national economies. To focus on what is needed, ITU will release a SIDS specific edition of our flagship Facts and Figures.

To advance universal meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation, ITU launched the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition (P2C), a multistakeholder alliance in close cooperation with the Office of the

Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States.

Pledges to date amount to almost USD 37 billion in connectivity projects. For SIDS, there are pledges valued at USD 17.74 billion. We are working with partners to ensure full implementation of the pledges. We plan a dedicated drive for pledges for SIDS.

**The second area is building multi-dimensional resilience.**

This requires investments in resilient energy and digital infrastructure, the development of anticipatory policies, building ecosystem initiatives, and facilitating international cooperation. The Early Warnings for All initiative aims to protect every person with advanced Early Warning Systems by 2027. As one of the lead implementing agencies, we are committed to partnering to support SIDS in building resilient national capacities for emergency telecommunications.

**The third area is Science, Technology and Innovation.** Through the creation of new industries, improving healthcare and education access with telemedicine and online learning, and enhancing environmental resilience through data-driven approaches and smart technologies, STI can foster sustainable economic growth and digital inclusion.

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I conclude with mention of the Smart Islands Initiative, a digital transformation collaboration focused on creating shared cross-sector digital infrastructure with common ICT building blocks that simultaneously support a number of applications and services (such as health, agriculture, education, finance, early warning and disaster prevention) empowering island communities with digitally-enabled solutions and skills.

Thank you.