Opening plenary of the TSAG

Virtual event

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Remarks

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Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues and friends,

It is my pleasure to address you today at the opening plenary of this TSAG meeting. Let me start by wishing you all a happy and healthy year ahead, hoping that we will be able to return to a more normal life very soon.

2020 was a very challenging year for all of us. Looking back, I would like to share with you two of the lessons learned during this time.

First, many of our traditions were shaken. Many things we thought that could not be done, were finally done, in response to the unexpected circumstances we had to live with.

Most companies that had been shy about embarking in a digital transformation, were compelled to transform.

In the ITU it was no different. We had to adapt very quickly to a new environment, moving physical meetings and events to virtual ones. Fortunately, the online platforms enabled our work to continue.

And what is more, a positive outcome was observed. The number of participants in our virtual meetings increased in more than 100% compared to previous participations in physical ones. And our constituents have been responding very positively to our offer of online seminars and webinars.

Moving forward, we can surely improve our electronic working methods, develop guidelines for virtual meetings and remote participation, and consider ways to enable informal discussions through virtual coffee rooms or other types of virtual social interaction.

Second, we realized how the work of the ITU is more relevant than ever, and the impact it has in the world.

Both the Standardization and the Radiocommunication Sectors develop international standards for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Many of these standards aim at reducing the digital divide and increasing connectivity.

During the pandemic, we realized how important it was to have access to the Internet. While many of us were teleworking and shopping for our basic needs online, half of the world's population was deprived from staying at home and earning a living in a safe manner. Those not connected to the Internet were the most vulnerable part of the population.

This helps illustrate how the impact of our work goes far beyond the ICT sector. It showed us that the work of ITU-T and ITU-R contribute directly to achieve the objectives of the WSIS action lines and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dear Colleagues,

The ITU-T and ITU-R Study Groups provide the platform where ICT experts and stakeholders can discuss, and SDOs (Standards Developing Organizations) can cooperate to develop international standards.

The role of Advisory Groups, such as the TSAG and the RAG, is to define the processes and working methods that will ensure that the study groups remain as effective and efficient as possible. Now more than ever, the work of the ITU must be fit for purpose, and inclusive.

Looking into the substance of our work, there are several topics in which the efforts of the ITU-T and those of the ITU-R complement each other.

The ITU-R completed, by the end of 2020, the detailed specifications of the terrestrial radio interfaces of International Mobile Telecommunications-2020.

Standardization activities within ITU-T are considering non-radio aspects of IMT-2020. These parallel studies explore aspects such as signaling, security, network softwarization and information-centric networking, network architecture, fixed-mobile convergence, network slicing, new traffic models and associated aspects of quality of service (QoS) and operations, administration and management.

In addition, ITU-T is working on the revision of Recommendations on Machine-to-Machine communications, on enhancement of standards on the Internet of things, and smart cities and communities for global development.

The smooth deployment of new technologies also requires the appraisal of EMF aspects of telecommunications/ICTs, via measurement and assessment of concerns related to human exposure to electromagnetic fields and cooperation with other relevant international organizations.

Finally, I am very pleased to observe that the promotion of gender equality has become a priority for the ITU-T as it is for the ITU-R. Following the Gender Declaration approved during the last World Radiocommunication Conference, our Radiocommunication Advisory Group created a Correspondence group on Gender, and we have recently launched the Network of Women for WRC-23. This initiative supports the participation and the leadership of women in all the WRC-23 preparatory activities at the national, regional, and global levels.

Dear Friends,

I am confident that by further strengthening coordination and collaboration between ITU-T and ITU-R we will develop ICT standards that enable a better and more sustainable future through technology.

I wish you a fruitful meeting and I look forward to working closely with you in the future.

Thank you very much.