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World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2014 (WTISD 2014) ***Broadband for Sustainable Development***

Message from ITU Secretary-General, Hamadoun I. Touré

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2014 marks the 149th anniversary of the establishment of ITU in 1865. The remarkable history of ITU exemplifies its stellar role in connecting the world to the most advanced and innovative means of communication, from the days of the telegraph to the Internet and mobile broadband which now allows us to be in touch anytime, anywhere with friends, family, colleagues and even things.

The right to communication is central to the information society; it is a key principle for equitable and universal access to information and knowledge that in turn empowers people to meet their aspirations and achieve their development goals.

Broadband connectivity is a critical element today in ensuring that information and communication technologies are used as effective delivery vehicles for health, education, governance, trade and commerce in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic growth.

ITU is therefore committed to achieving universal access to broadband connectivity – and to foster the political will needed to achieve this objective.

This year, on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, we focus on the theme: "Broadband for Sustainable Development".

It is now well recognized that digital development is a transformative tool to fast-track sustainable development. In order to realize its full potential, it is essential to roll-out high-speed broadband networks, making it affordable as well as universally accessible.

In this respect, ITU and the Broadband Commission for Digital Development are at the forefront of advocating the roll-out of broadband as a means of achieving sustainable development. This was further underlined by the World Telecommunication Development Conference this year to focus on the theme "Broadband for Sustainable Development".

ITU's thrust to push the broadband agenda for sustainable development focuses on the dual goals of supporting the deployment of mobile broadband and the continued rollout of fixed-line technologies along with a thrust on meeting the global challenges of our times, such as combating climate change. Broadband-based ICT networks are powerful cross-cutting enablers to achieve the three pillars of sustainable development – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance.

I call upon our partners – governments, industry, academia and technical experts – to identify key gaps in broadband research and development, infrastructure, and packaged development of applications

and services; define policy priorities for action in the areas of allocating radio frequency spectrum for broadband, universal access obligations and innovative financing mechanisms; and to seek leading edge technological solutions, particularly in the extension of broadband access into rural areas, least developed countries and small island developing states.

Let us put our resources together to harness the catalytic role of ICTs in achieving sustainable development. It is the key to ensuring a better future for all.