**6–16 June 2022
Kigali, Rwanda**

WTDC DECLARATION

We, the high-level representatives of ITU Member States, delegates and participants endorse the present Declaration at the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, which took place in Kigali, Rwanda from 6 to 16 June 2022 under the theme "Connecting the Unconnected to Achieve Sustainable Development".

We declare that:

1. Telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the foundation for every economic sector and a catalyst for improving peoples' lives by way of social inclusion, decent employment and personal growth. Yet, in 2021 some 2.9 billion people remain unconnected, and for them, the transformative power of telecommunications/ICTs remains untapped.

2. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has introduced many challenges and changed the way we live, work, learn and do business. In the digital era, universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity is indispensable and provides opportunities for boosting productivity and efficiency, ending poverty, improving livelihoods and ensuring that sustainable development becomes a reality for all. Continuing to build confidence, trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs remains of vital importance.

3. Inequalities remain and continue to widen in the use of data and digital ICT-centric technologies, and in the digitally skilled human resources between regions, between and within countries in urban and rural areas, and between women and men. We recognize that available, affordable, dependable and accessible ICTs when leveraged through adequate digital skills can provide powerful drivers for development and are instrumental in timely, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Capacity building/development in different ICT areas, including spectrum management, remains a challenge.

4. Digital inclusion is a necessity, and insufficient digital capacity and lack of digital skills are core barriers to digital transformation and the digital economy. The demand for digitally skilled workers will increase with the accelerated move towards digital transformation. While many jobs have been and will be lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation and the digital economy can nurture new ICT-centric jobs. Education and capacity building for youth, and their access to digital skills and tools, are essential for youth engagement in shaping the digital future.

5. We have just eight years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and telecommunications/ICTs are agents of change that can shape the future for the better. Telecommunications/ICTs are instrumental in multistakeholder activities and sharing best practices as prescribed by the World Summit on the Information Society. Multistakeholder cooperation offers a platform for all to join forces, seize opportunities and leverage innovations offered by efficient new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, while mitigating risks, so that progress towards sustainable development can be made collectively.

6. Developing countries, and in particular least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), face additional challenges in mobilizing sufficient investment and financing for telecommunications/ICTs and digital infrastructures and require substantial support to provide universal, secure, reliable and affordable telecommunications/ICTs.

We commit to:

a. Accelerating the expansion and use of efficient and up-to-date digital infrastructures, services and applications for building and further developing the digital economy, including mobilization of financial resources for providing universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity to the unconnected as soon as possible. This will also include promoting investments in broadband infrastructure deployment, adoption and access with a view to supporting sustainable development, encouraging cooperation among Member States and creating alliances and partnerships between public and private sectors, international funding agencies and other stakeholders.

b. Urgently mitigating the impact of disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic by building digital resilience through bold and innovative national plans and recovery strategies for ensuring governance, business, education and social-life continuity. This includes providing the necessary platforms and networks for essential activities such as teleworking, e-commerce, remote learning, telemedicine and digital financial services, while paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, the elderly and children, and at the same time preparing the ground for future developments in the post-COVID-19 era. In doing so, we commit to co-create a secure, simplified and standards-based, well-coordinated approach in order to implement human-centered digital solutions that will empower individuals and businesses, while improving social well-being. We are also fully committed to tackling environmental and climate-change issues, notably in implementing telecommunication/ICT tools to mitigate the impact of climate change and addressing the impact of telecommunications/ICTs on the environment, in collaboration with users, the private sector, policy-makers and regulators.

c. Promoting sound, open, transparent, collaborative and future-proof policy and regulatory decisions with a view to facilitating digital transformation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We will implement innovative strategies and policy/regulatory initiatives to bridge the widening digital divides by enabling universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity and promoting increased digital inclusion, while enhancing confidence and security

in the use of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and services. As such, we will develop and implement policy/regulatory frameworks to help ensure infrastructure resiliency, interoperability and protection of data, as well as increase broadband uptake. Besides, we will adopt effective plans to develop and enhance digital capacities and skills that are required in the online world, without which the digital divides will continue to widen.

d.   Fully exploiting the opportunities provided by digital transformation of various sectors of the economy by supporting all relevant stakeholders to unleash new and emerging telecommunication/ICT technologies and services. We will encourage innovation and youth engagement to foster sustainable development and address current and future challenges, such as poverty alleviation, job creation, gender inequality and cybersecurity. In doing so, we will put in place the necessary prerequisites, such as electricity, facilitate digital inclusion and implement evidence-based decision-making, to measure and maximize the impact of digital transformation.

e.   Providing support to and cooperating with developing countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS in addressing their constraints for accessing digital-centric new and emerging telecommunication/ICT technologies and services and for the integration thereof into different sectors, such as government services, agriculture, education, health, finance, transport, etc.

f.   Promoting international cooperation and partnership among ITU membership and development-oriented stakeholders for achieving sustainable development using telecommunication/ICT-centric digital technologies. We will enhance and encourage cooperation and partnership between developing countries and between developed and developing countries in order to facilitate sharing of technology, knowledge and best practices with a view to promoting sustainable development and economic growth.

Accordingly, we, the delegates to the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, declare our commitment to the full and rapid implementation of this Declaration. We also pledge to spare no effort towards the expansion and use of telecommunications/ICTs and digital infrastructures, applications and services for building and establishing truly sustainable digital economies and societies.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference calls upon the ITU membership and all development-oriented stakeholders, including those in the United Nations system, to contribute actively towards the successful implementation of this Declaration.