Statement by
Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
Agenda Item 17: Information and communications technologies for development

28 October 2015

Distinguished Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Let me begin by aligning ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of South Africa on behalf of G77 and China.

2. We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General for his very comprehensive report on this agenda item.

Mr Chair,

3. As outlined in the SG's report and based on our own experiences, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and internet connectivity have seen an unprecedented rise since 2003. However, their access and deployment has not been even. The digital divide continues to persist and connectivity gaps between developed and developing countries widen. One of the founding principles of WSIS was to address the digital divide. Lack of access to affordable and reliable technologies remains a key challenge in developing countries, especially among SIDS.

4. ICT has long been recognized as key enablers of socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. Much has been said about the leaps and bounds with which the information age has evolved. However, the issue at stake here is about how the vulnerable can take advantage of this progress and fulfil their developmental aspirations. For SIDS, the opportunity of harnessing technological innovation and ensuring its universal access has huge implications.

Mr. Chair,

5. The implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda has close ties with the increase in the use of and access to ICT. ICT permeate our societies in a very fundamental way, and

Permanent Mission of Maldives to the United Nations | 800 Second Avenue, Suite 400E, New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: +1-212-599-6194 / +1-212-599-6195 | Fax: +1-212-661-6405 |www.MaldivesMission.com | info@MaldivesMission.com
Page **1** of **3**

innovation must be harnessed to ensure that these outcomes are leveraged for sustainable development.

6. Samoa Pathway identifies the role of ICT in many social sectors including in paragraph 27g for education, the creation of employment, including youth employment, and for economic sustainability purposes. High transaction costs make it very difficult for us to invest in technology infrastructure and in this context we recall the commitment made in paragraph 111 of the Samoa Pathway to support the efforts of SIDS to gain access, on mutually agreed terms, to appropriate, reliable, affordable, modern and environmentally sound technologies and know-how and to increase connectivity and the use of information and communications technology through improved infrastructure, training and national legislation, as well as public and private sector involvement.

7. ICT has a huge role to play in the eradication of poverty. We have witnessed its potential in poverty reduction through its power to build more "livelihood assets", which are defined as both tangible and intangible, in the areas of human, social, natural, physical and financial capital, and secure long-term employment opportunities in rural areas, including through creation of micro enterprises. Connectivity bridges gaps and provides access to public services to large populations, in sectors as diverse as e-banking, e-government, e-agriculture, e-health and e-employment. We need to keep investigating and implementing communication technologies in our fight against poverty.

8. Another facet of using ICT in development is to develop them for climate change and disaster risk management. Because of the many financial and non-financial costs that we face due to natural disasters, it is imperative that these risks are minimized. We should look into leveraging innovation in order to monitor, predict, mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. These can be achieved through developing ICT networks, early warning systems, remote sensing, computer based systems for mapping and wireless technologies among others. The role of technology for disaster risk reduction has to be central to the discourse on SIDS and ICTs. And the mobilization of public finance is critical for coordinated assistance to groups of countries in special situations, including SIDS.

Mr Chair,

9. While the issue of the digital divide in terms of access remains a primary challenge in developing countries, the factors involved are more complex. Lack of access to information is coupled by non-interpretability of the data received. The digital divide continues to widen because access to information, in and of itself, does not result into knowledge. The divide can only be bridged when content and technology is geared towards local needs and priorities while enhancing capabilities of end users to make productive use of the data.

10. AOSIS also supports the establishment of national and regional ICT platforms and information dissemination hubs to facilitate exchange of experiences and capacities in

order to advance knowledge sharing. Especially for SIDS, regional access to information on best practices, policy mechanisms and programs for disaster risk reduction is crucial to effectively and easily respond to natural disasters and environmental hazards.

11. In order that the voices of all concerned parties are adequately heard; processes and discussions around this matter should be transparent and participation in it equitable. We as SIDS, due to our limited capacity, have always been constrained in finding a seat at the table, in the pertinent discussion of ICT which is transforming the way humans live, interact and grow.

Mr Chair,

12. This agenda item cannot be viewed in a vacuum. It is up to us to formulate concrete ways to mainstream ICTs in our collective efforts and to help us on our path to sustainable development.

Thank you.