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Global Symposium on Human Capital Development

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As Prepared for Delivery

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to open this ITU Global Symposium on Human Capital Development. In doing so, I would like to thank the United Kingdom Telecommunication Academy (UKTA) for hosting this event. UKTA has been associated with our Global Symposia for some time now and without their ongoing commitment and organizational ability, it would not have the reputation it has now today. Through UKTA, I would also like to express my appreciation to our sponsors who have all made contributions to the success of this Symposium.

It is only appropriate that we hold an event on human capital development at the University of Warwick – I recently learned that this is one of only five institutions never to have been rated outside of the UK's top ten universities in terms of teaching excellence and research. We could not ask for a better atmosphere for a healthy debate on the topic of human capital development and looking over the agenda I see a distinguished group of speakers who will take to the podium to share their latest thinking and expertise.

This Global Symposium takes place once every two years. However, due to the number of other ITU events scheduled, this Symposium is now a year overdue as the last was held in November 2005. Shortly afterwards, in early 2006, the World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC) took place in Doha, Qatar, which charted the current four year programme cycle for the ITU's Development Sector. In December of that same year, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference was held in Antalya, Turkey, after which the current team of ITU elected officials, including myself, took office.

I might also mention here that at the last ITU World Telecommunications Development Conference, the ITU established a Working Group on Human Resources (WGHRD) and, in doing so, our 191 Member States have demonstrated the importance they attach to this in this sector. I am pleased to inform you that the WGHRD will be meeting during the course of this Symposium.

Though I have been involved in a number of global events since taking office as the Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, this is my first occasion to participate in an event gathering experts whose mandate is specific to the topic of human capacity building. In that regard, I consider my participation here as a unique opportunity to learn more about this important domain which is core to the mission of the ITU Development Sector.

The current themes defining our global economy, in general, and the information and communications technology sector, in particular, evolve around constant change and the pace of that change. The drivers for this change are multifaceted and multidimensional, ranging from changes in technology, industry structure, organization of work, and conduct of business in a globalised economy. This change is rapidly influencing and redefining management thinking and relations at the workplace in ways ever more complex. Depending on how one looks at life, it is a blessing or a challenge that so much of this change is taking place during our lifetime.

However, there is a growing consensus that competitive advantage in today's knowledge economies lies principally in fostering the skills and competencies of people – and this cuts across nations, regions, sectors and organizations. This is very significant as it is explicit recognition that individual human development is fundamental to our collective development as societies.

This realization has been driven by a combination of factors, among which is the explosive growth of knowledge since the birth of the internet. We now live in a knowledge economy where information is power. The growth of information-driven service sectors is expanding business opportunities beyond the traditional productive sectors. Within the information and communication technology sector, the list of opportunities that are emerging grows every day and only those with the rapid ability to learn, adapt and recognize new opportunities will survive.

Needless to say, the demand side of this industry growth has a very hard time keeping up with the supply side of talent. Surveys demonstrate that organizations see shortage of talent as one of their greatest challenges. This phenomenon places human resource and, in particular, talent management, at the centre of corporate strategy formulation and implementation. The human resources profession is being called upon to advise how best to attract, retain and develop the best talent within organizations. And as human talent is increasingly mobile in a globalized economy, the extent of the problem is particularly acute for those in the developing world.

In that regard, the ITU's Human Capacity Division is monitoring the latest developments in this sector and advising on how best to prepare human resource responses to today's challenges. In each of our regional offices, we are designating capacity building specialists who work on regional human resource benchmarks, and coordinate opportunities for sharing on best practices. They also promote the documentation and dissemination of case studies on all relevant and topical human resources issues, including, among others, management of change, optimization of human resource assets, and alignment of the human resource functions with overall business strategy objectives.

One of our specific initiatives, the Centres of Excellence project, through which many of our regional capacity building activities are coordinated, has recently been revamped and is growing rapidly in all regions. Also this year, ITU is rolling out a new open-source e-Learning platform to facilitate distance learning. This e-Learning platform will complement our face-to-face training opportunities and over the coming years we shall be making lots of new ICT course curricula available on this platform. We are also planning on strengthening our very successful Internet Training Centre Initiative throughout the globe and engaging with new partners for new courseware and certificate programmes. We have also made available at

this event our new Training Catalogue, which will enable you to see at a glance the programmes on offer in your region and globally. Please do speak with us if you are interested in cooperating more directly with any of these ITU initiatives.

I do not intend to take any more of your time, as I realize that you have a busy schedule before you. One of the world's greatest scientists of the 20th century and also a great educator was the late Linus Pauling. He once said: "The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas." Over the new few days, both during the formal sessions and in the corridors, I am sure that you will share many new ideas and when we leave here, we will be richer with each other's lessons and experiences. I hope that at the end of this event, you will also share your new ideas with ITU so that we can best assist you and we can all become more effective managers of human capital.

All my very best wishes for a successful event.