



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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**Remarks by
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United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to address this conference and take part in this panel on Information and Communications Technology solutions for 21st Century challenges.

And thanks to my dear friend Luis Neves of Deutsche Telekom and Chair of the Global e-Sustainability Initiative, or Ge-SI.

GeSI has been a partner with the UNFCCC and its Momentum for Change initiative since 2013, and we are grateful for its members support.

The challenges facing every man, woman and child; every government, city and region; and every business and investor in the 21st Century are legion.

But so are the opportunities. The new suite of Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Change Agreement reflect these twin realities.

The world has, since the beginning of the first industrial revolution, generated enormous wealth. But it has come at the expense of our atmosphere and our nature based assets while leaving too many people behind—both these physical and natural worlds underpin all life on Earth.

The SDGs and the Paris Agreement seek to restore a balance lost over the past two centuries but in the setting of a world of seven billion people rising to over 10 billion in the 2050s.

They seek to address not only environmental degradation but social and economic imbalances.

In short they speak to an enormous and unprecedented transformation of our global economy; of our collective environmental footprint; and of the possibility to provide a decent quality of life full of possibilities for people everywhere.

But time is short—indeed time is the constraint now. The direction is set, but we need to peak global emissions fast and bring them down dramatically afterwards to realize a climate-neutral world in the second half of the century.

This is the only way to keep a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius and minimize the damage and maximize the opportunities of a different, cleaner and greener development path.

I am not going to dwell on the extraordinary potential of ICT to contribute to this paradigm shift—previous speakers, supported by excellent data from, for example, the Smarter 2030 and Systems Transformation reports commissioned by GeSI, outline in compelling and crystal clear terms the arguments and benefits.

Instead I would like to suggest some actions that may be required to catalyse and accelerate ICT's role in sustainable development and climate action in order to support to its full potential for the new and exciting course upon which a family of nations has now embarked.

Making the ICT Case to Governments—South and North

Before the Paris climate change conference, nations put forward their climate action plans aimed at kick-starting a transition away from fossil fuels, high carbon societies and pollution.

These Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, outline in some cases in great detail how domestically countries will pursue their climate friendly and sustainable development policies and projects.

They are in many ways investment portfolios and expressions of a new ambition.

However, according to my analysis, not one mentions ICT. Why? Well on one hand it is perhaps understandable: ICT is an enabler.

It is a bit like medicine—your doctor will often focus on the condition of your heart, healthy kidneys or lungs or some other organ of your body.

This is important—but without a person's brain and nervous system, having a strong heart and whistle-clean lungs is not going to make a cents difference to your overall health, let alone your chance of winning an Olympic gold medal in Japan in 2020!

And so it is with, for example, modern renewable energy systems, sustainable cities and smart buildings or more advanced early warnings systems or building resilience.

Without the 'brain' and a sophisticated nervous system—in short, ICT—the full potential of clean energy across an economy or all the other initiatives and projects needed to make this grand transformation will fall short.

You know we all tend to live in bubbles, convinced that everyone else understands an issue or the potential of ICT—but I am afraid that some decision makers may equate ICT with new mobiles with hip call features and cooler laptops.

When, for example, they need to know that their renewable energy targets will get even better with ICT-enabled smart grids and their building stock or factories can be greened to even higher levels with key enabling technologies.

In short, there is still a lot of marketing to be done.

I know that GeSI members understand this—the Momentum for Change initiative I mentioned earlier focuses on ICT Solutions and brings to the attention of the media and policymakers; the rest of the UN system and local authority leaders a wealth of inspirational projects deploying ICT.

Last year's winners ranged from a Handy[smartphone]-based weather forecasting system that is assisting 100,000 farmers in Uganda to reduce crop losses to an ICT-based system that is bringing the electric car to life via smart charging points in the United States.

These winning projects give ICT a human face, focuses on what it can do and achieve rather than an assembly of widgets or fine words!

The 2016 winners will be honoured at the next round of climate negotiations in Marrakech, Morocco in November and I hope as many of you who can will join us.

So marketing ICT as a key catalyst for climate and for the SDGs is important and urgent as countries begin implementing their action plans.

Finance—Engaging the Money Men and Woman

The other key is going to be finance.

Under the Paris Agreement, developed countries have pledged to provide \$100 billion per year to developing countries by 2020—and in Marrakech a key report will be released as to whether that funding is building towards the \$100 billion mark.

\$100 billion by 2020 is politically and practically important, but we all know this is pump priming money.

By many estimates, \$5 trillion to \$7 trillion will be needed into a greening of the global economy to meet the aims, aspirations and goals of the SDGs and Paris.

There are many positive signals that this shift in investments is happening.

Investors with assets totalling close to \$3 trillion have also pledged to divest from fossil fuels in favour of clean energy investments—and there are many more announcements from both the public and private sectors that we could mention including the growth of the green bond market to \$46 billion this year.

And innovative financing is also emerging at the smaller scale, vital in many poorer countries.

For example, over 100,000 homes in Tanzania now have solar power courtesy of a company called Off-Grid Electric backed by \$45 million-worth of debt financing—the Million Solar Homes Fund.

The Fund, the biggest of its kind to date, is now assisting to scale up expansion to ever more customers in East Africa and beyond.

But the overall scale is still behind the curve and to what extent is the current, let alone future, greening of investment factoring in ICT?

I do not know the answer to this but I suspect that certainly in some areas—from sustainable urban transport and rapid transit systems to buildings and energy efficiency—there is substantial need for improvement in terms of harnessing ICT.

There may be many other barriers to the uptake of ICT in support of a sustainable century—but certainly selling the benefits and ensuring ICT is factored into the financial envelopes emerging, would seem to be central issues.

It is a big chicken and egg or egg and chicken depending on where you sit. Without greater awareness among policymakers and the people who actually draw up projects and investment proposals, ICT may underachieve in terms of its contribution.

Without finance supporting ICT as an enabler in countless projects and in the overall transformation, any awareness among policymakers—especially in developing countries—may fall on deaf ears.

In some cases, ICT may make a project more expensive at the outset with higher up-front costs but lower overheads down the line.

So this should not be a barrier, we have been there before with renewable energy and smart government policy, where tax breaks and feed-in tariffs allied to progressive investors have overcome this hurdle with spectacular success in many countries.

So my message to this conference is—become ambassadors for ICT and its sustainability contribution to the widest possible audience.

Tell your elected officials about its crucial role. If you have a pension, ask the trustees if they are aware of the returns to the fund and to the planet from inclusion of ICT in green investment choices.

The time really is now—because the great transformation is underway and its success will depend as much on its scale but the speed with which it happens.

ICT can play a critical role in overcoming poverty and powering up a sustainable present and an even more sustainable future. It is time to make sure everyone sits up, listens and fires up the synapses and nervous systems of truly low-carbon, inclusive societies.

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