INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION	ITU

OPENING REMARKS

By

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- **Mr. President**
- Excellences,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure, and privilege to address you this afternoon on behalf of the International Telecommunication Union, on the occasion of the Third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

Mr. President,

ITU will in a few months celebrate 150 years of existence marking years of resilience stretching from 1865, the first world war, the second world war and through periods of financial and market turbulences, even. Notwithstanding, we have consistently worked hard to develop telecommunication standards, allocate spectrum, and implement telecommunication connectivity projects across the world. The work of ITU is contributing to both the global development agenda and to disaster mitigation and response in line with the ITU Constitution calling for international telecommunication services '**to give absolute priority to all telecommunications concerning safety of life at sea, on land, in the air or in outer space ...'.** Just last week, ITU deployed broadband satellite equipment to Vanuatu in

response to Cyclone PAM, just as we have done in many previous disasters in other countries.

Today, advances in science and communications technology, satellite imagery, and remote sensing, are making immense contribution to combating climate change, disaster risk reduction and management. The good news does not end there. The world is witnessing unprecedented growth in the area of information and communication technologies essential for information exchange and alerting. Our statistics show that by end of 2014 there were nearly 7 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions worldwide, and almost 3 billion people connected to the Internet. Machine-to-Machine communication is growing fast with over 5 billion devices expected to be connected to each other by end of 2015. If this trend continues, more than 20 billion devices will be communicating with each other by year 2020. We should exploit the opportunities that come with these technological leaps. Although, to varying degrees, all regions have experienced the wrath of natural disasters with a more devastating effect in the least developed countries, and small-island developing states.

Excellences
Ladies and gentlemen,
Let me leave you with three points that I think could help support the new disaster risk reduction framework:

First, **Technology and Innovation**: In order to fully embrace new technologies, we have to innovate. For instance, the Big Data revolution can make a huge contribution. Working with big data generated on past disasters help advance analytic, modeling, and computational capabilities, with applications such as hazard models based on probabilities. We then get real time data sensing, visualization, analysis, experimentation and prediction, which are critical for time-sensitive decision-making.

Second, **Partnerships**: There is need for a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectorial, and multi-disciplinary approach to disaster risk reduction. It is important that Governments, Private Sector, Inter-Governmental Organization, NGOs, local communities and Academia work together in order to bring out bright ideas that could contribute to better disaster risk reduction efforts.

Third**, Financing**: Well thought disaster mitigation measures save billions of dollars that in turn could be used to finance development. Coordinated efforts could no doubt optimize the use of scarce resources. Let me assure you, ITU is ready to partner with you all.

Mr. President,

Let me now conclude by going back where I began. ICT is the transforming technology of our age. Yet its potential is still hugely under-exploited. Its capacity to transform businesses, education, health, public service and societies is immense. It is the key long-term economic and social game changer. Above all, this technology

can save lives as it provides us with the capability to monitor, predict, detect, and respond to disasters. What we need is commitment and passion to harness this tool for human progress. Finally, as many have said before me: 'A genuine passion, is like a mountain stream; it admits of no impediments; it cannot go backward; it must go forward.' Excellencies, **we have to go forward** even when confronted by challenges that may seem insurmountable.

I thank you.

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