

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- On behalf of the ITU Secretary-General, I thank you for inviting ITU to participate in the Open Consultation that Kenya and the wider East African region are conducting on the World Conference on International Telecommunications, WCIT-12.
- We thank the Government of Kenya and the African Telecommunications Union for organizing this open consultation.
- Last week, ITU's Governing body, ITU Council, took a landmark decision on the proposal for public consultation and open access to key conference documents.
- Based on a proposal by the ITU Secretary-General, the forty eight Member States that make up the ITU Council discussed the need for open and online consultations with key communities, such as civil society stakeholders.
- It was agreed that the latest version of the main conference preparatory document will be made publically available on the ITU website within the coming days. This document is often referred to as TD64, and it gathers together more than 450 contributions that members have submitted during the preparatory process of WCIT-12.
- Additionally, the Council unanimously agreed that a publicly accessible page will be established on the WCIT-12 section of the ITU website, where all stakeholders can express their opinions on the content of the latest version of TD64, or any other matter related to WCIT.
- This open access for inputs was applauded by the Council as an important way for the ITU membership to be able to note the various viewpoints that surround the conference.
- In his remarks to Council during the debate, ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré noted that "the world is changing, in large part thanks to the growth in telecommunications facilitated by the ITU, and we need to adapt to that changing world. As we have always done since ITU's founding in 1865".

- Dr Touré noted that “all ITU members have full access to all WCIT-12 documents and can share them within their constituencies.” As well as proposing that ITU should hold open consultations on WCIT-12, he encouraged all Member States to do so too.
- The Secretary-General stressed that while all documents are available in ITU’s six official languages, it is nevertheless “crucial for Member States to prioritize translation into other national languages, so that national level consultations can encompass all citizens and ensure the widespread engagement of civil society in the important issues that are being debated in the run up to WCIT-12”.
- In his remarks, He noted with satisfaction open consultations currently underway in the Netherlands and this meeting in Kenya, commending both countries for their initiatives.
- More of such actions are encouraged at the national and regional level as we move forward, both in the interests of transparency and of accountability.
- We have been disappointed to see that some of those who have had access to WCIT proposals have chosen to continue to publicly mis-state or distort them in public forums and to journalists; sometimes to the point of caricature.
- These distortions and mis-statements could be found plausible by credulous members of the public, and could even be used to influence national parliaments.
- Most of us were not involved in the preparations for the 1988 conference in Melbourne. But the historical record shows that many of the fears, concerns, and criticisms surrounding WCIT also appeared in 1988.
- As we know, those fears and concerns were unwarranted: the 1988 Melbourne conference created the framework that enabled the spectacular growth of telecommunications – including the Internet – over the past 24 years.
- As we know, 1988 set the stage for the information society.
- And we are absolutely convinced that WCIT 2012 will set the stage for the knowledge society.
- We do not want such unwarranted fears and concerns to overshadow all the good work we are doing.

- Open Consultations, such as the one we are having here, will go a long way in addressing these fears and concerns - where national governments and regional organizations take the lead in involving all their stakeholders in the preparations leading up to WCIT-12, giving everyone the opportunity to voice their views and opinions, and bringing these opinions into the preparatory process through contributions from the respective Member States.
- Also, I would like to note that there has been some lack of clarity on whether Civil Society is part of ITU membership and how such organizations can become members of the ITU. It should be noted that all civil society organizations, of an international nature and who are working on issues related to information and communication technologies, are already entitled join the ITU as members and indeed several such additional entities were welcomed into ITU this year and their membership fees were waived; this was supported and endorsed by the ITU Council.
- With this I would like to wish you good luck in your deliberations. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have during the course of the two days. If you don't feel comfortable in raising your question in public, feel free to approach me directly.
- Thank You.