Statement by the President of the ECOSOC during 15th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) on 9 November 2020.

Thank you Undersecretary General.

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this 2020 meeting of the Internet Governance Forum.

The fact that this virtual 15th session of the Forum, hosted by the United Nations is being held virtually, is one indication of the power of digital technologies to bring people together in search for solutions to sustainable development in these most difficult times, digital technologies have made unprecedented progress possible yet this progress has been unequal, digital governance is critical.

The latest research shows the high levels of concentration of resources, skills, and capacities needed to leverage digital transformation. And this research indicates to risk that further digitalization, and data driven development will lead to widening digital divides in income inequalities.

We need stronger efforts, so that national and international digital governance keeps up with accelerating technological change.

Gaps in digital governance could quickly become bottlenecks for the application of frontier technologies for sustainable development. This is particularly visible if you see the mega trends in this sphere.

One, the explosive growth of data volumes and cross border flows.

Second, the dominance of the ICT business environment by huge data management Corporation.

Three, the past base and unprecedented and unpredictable change in digital technologies.

Four, the ever stronger force with which digitalization drives and sets the cause of economic, social, and cultural change.

Private sector, which owns 70% of the ICT infrastructure has an important responsibility.

It is essential to address some of the policies and issues relating to the big technology companies, including tax policies, transfer pricing, free and fair trade, cyber security and cyber crimes, as well as the propagation of violence and hate over the internet.

Ensuring privacy, security, and responsible management of data is also fundamental. Some other areas where truly inclusive international governance processes could bring significant benefits include financial inclusion and online health services.

But the long standing challenge. That should remain a critical focus for digital governance is the fight against the digital divides, as the President of the Assembly has mentioned that 87% individuals in developed countries are connected to the internet in comparison to only 19% in the least developed countries.

The COVID-19 crisis highlights the profound inequity of the digital divide, where half the world is using the Internet to stay connected and continue business, while the other half is living literally in another world disconnected and disempowered.

This is why I believe that we, the developing countries must aim, not only to catch up but to leapfrog into the digital era, focusing on broadband, 5G, artificial intelligence and getting on board the knowledge economy; we should strive to ensure that the IGF continuously improves the space for developing countries to be heard and to be at the table in evolving digital governance.

Credible and effective digital governance cannot exist without truly inclusive and participatory approaches the participation of actors from developing countries is essential and must be better supported.

The Economic and Social Council's Commission on science and technology for development offers one indispensable space for inclusive consideration of digital governance issues.

So does the STI forum, which will be convened next year, again, to consider digital and other technological advances.

Ladies and gentlemen, the development challenges of digitalization require a coordinated multilateral response that draws on the respective comparative advantages of each actor in the international arena.

The UN Secretary General's roadmap offers a good pathway to bridge the digital divide.

I wish you all success in your consideration of this critical issue of the world today.

Thank you.