



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th session of the United Nations

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**High-Level Forum on South-South Economic Cooperation for
Sustainable Development: Investing in Broadband**

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Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Secretary-General of the ITU,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you for this breakfast to exchange views on “Investing in Broadband” for sustainable development because it offers one of the most innovative mechanisms for South-South Cooperation.

If we spend just a moment to think about how in our own personal lives, internet connectivity has dramatically altered the way we network, do business, learn, and organize ourselves, we can easily imagine the profound influence it can have on our collective abilities to meet our agreed development goals.

While many of us have embraced the vitality of the internet, it is young people, in particular, who have been quick to put this technology to new and life-changing uses. It has allowed them to build new forms of connectivity, share knowledge, and organize socially for a variety of socio-political and humanitarian causes.

Distinguished Guests,

It is time to expand the benefits from this technology to communities, societies and individuals all across the globe.

With 41% of the world’s households now connected to the internet, we can surely say this technological revolution has swiftly gripped our world. At the same time, with an overwhelming 90% of the world’s 1.1 billion households without an internet connection in the developing world, the digital divide – one could call it a digital chasm- is a real concern.

This was recognized by our Heads of State and Government when they adopted the Rio+20 Outcome Document in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Specifically, it says, (quote) ...“it is essential to work towards improved access to information and communications technology, especially broadband networks and services, and bridge the digital divide, recognizing the contribution of international cooperation in this regard.” (end quote).

The fact that among ICTs, broadband adoption has demonstrated the greatest impact on GDP growth, is a reminder of why we must look toward including a broadband component in our development frameworks at the both the global and national levels.

Broadband can bring key services to the most vulnerable populations, in the most remote locations. From e-learning to telemedicine and remote diagnosis services; from e-government services to academic research networks; broadband can make a real difference in the lives of all individuals and communities.

While the advent of the ICT revolution ushered in what many called an “information society” we are now moving towards *knowledge* societies, in which broadband networks not only deliver information, but empower populations and help them break the cycle of poverty.

Yet the expansion of broadband networks in the developing world faces many challenges: financial, technical, and legal and regulatory. South-South and Triangular Cooperation can help governments and other stakeholders address these challenges through sharing of best practices and the facilitation of technology transfer.

Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This resonates very well with the theme I have chosen for the 68th session of the General Assembly “The post-2015 development agenda: Setting the Stage!” and specifically one

of the events I will convene: Contributions of South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for development to the post-2015 development agenda. I hope the ideas you exchange here will ultimately benefit that event, so I look forward to hearing how we can harness the potential of ICTs and broadband networks to achieve sustainable development.

Let's do everything we can to ensure that the technologies that have brought us so many personal benefits, offer the same opportunity and possibility to all people around the world.

Thank you.