

WSIS Forum 2017 High Level Statement

Delivered by IEEE President Karen Bartleson on 13 June 2017

Secretary General, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to be here today, and to deliver this statement on behalf of IEEE as a Specific Activity Partner of the 2017 WSIS Forum.

As the world's largest technical professional association, IEEE represents over 420,000 members worldwide from over 190 countries. As an international body it has a vital role in impactful technology development and standardization, and our members continue to shape Information Communication Technologies for current and future generations. Grounded in the principles of openness, transparency and inclusiveness, we work in collaboration with all stakeholders around the globe to advance technology for the benefit of humanity.

IEEE shares the vision of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society as outlined by the United Nations through the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). ICTs will play a central role in sustainable development. Connecting the citizens of the world and achieving this crucial development is our common responsibility. IEEE is committed to supporting ICT development and adoption, as well as global connectivity, as these are foundational to accelerating social and economic growth and sustainable development with a specific focus on local, grassroots efforts to ensure that the solutions are tailored to the unique needs and strengths of each individual community.

Importantly, our members are pursuing these efforts on a daily basis. One example is the work of the IEEE Special Interest Group on Humanitarian Technology in Tunisia. This group consists mostly of students most of whom are at the university level. Their goal is to create technology hubs at schools throughout Tunisia and to provide the necessary ICT skills training, so that the access to these technologies is both meaningful and beneficial to their local communities.

Another example was the first ever Hackathon at the WSIS Forum, which IEEE had the honor to cohost. In this Hackathon students from around the world came together to develop innovative digital solutions to reduce exposure to common risk factors for non-communicable diseases in smart, healthy cities in middle-and lower-income countries. Using technology to create practical solutions to societal concerns is at the heart of IEEE's mission.

IEEE endorses the goal of universal access to the internet and supports national initiatives and international collaborations designed to expand access to the billions of people in both developed and developing countries around the world who do not have access to the internet.

Through its global reach and capabilities, IEEE has an important role to play in advancing solutions to the global internet access challenge. Promoting universal internet access is inherent

in our mission of fostering technology innovation and excellence for the benefit of humanity. To this end, we call upon the world-wide community of engineers, scientists, industry leaders, policy experts and others to apply their knowledge and skills to address the challenge of universal access to the internet. As the internet's value in all areas of global community and economy grows, we draw attention to the need to address the issues of trust, safety and security, which can become barriers to achieving global benefits of the internet, particularly for currently underserved countries and communities. We call upon the global community to work collectively to address these issues and to ensure digital inclusion through trust and agency.

IEEE is committed to working with all stakeholders seeking to leverage information and communication technologies in order to implement the WSIS vision. Last year, during this opening ceremony of the WSIS Forum, IEEE stated that achieving the SDGs is not an easy task but one that everyone in this room is willing to accept. We are heartened to see the significant achievements supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but there is still much work to be done. We stand ready for continued collaboration with all of you as we work united by a shared vision of a truly global information and knowledge society.

Thank you.