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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. The African Group associates itself with the statement made by Fiji on behalf of the G-77 and China.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the regional and international levels.
Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to note that continued growth has been achieved in the availability and use of information and communications technologies (ICTs). At the same time we are concerned about a new digital divide arising between countries which have high broadband capacity and Internet usage and those, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), where broadband investment and Internet adoption are less advanced.

Although mobile phone usage and internet penetration remains comparatively low in Africa, never before in the history of the continent has the population been as connected as it is today. The ICT sector is becoming socially and economically relevant to Africa which has been the major economic driver over the past decade.

Recent studies, conducted by the World Bank and the African Development Bank, with the support of the African Union, identifies the growing contribution of ICTs to various sectors including Agriculture, Climate Change Adaptation, Education, Financial Services, Government Services and Health. In addition, the studies highlight the role of ICTs in enhancing African regional trade and integration as well as the need to build a competitive ICT industry to boost innovation, job creation and the export potential of African companies.
The Secretary-General’s report also stated that Africa has continued to make progress in access to ICTs and their application in development. Investment in international and national broadband infrastructure has grown, improving connectivity, increasing bandwidth and enabling services including e-government and development applications. Ownership of mobile telephones and Internet use has grown rapidly. However, broadband deployment has not kept pace with other regions, causing concern that Africa may miss economic opportunities that depend on high-quality communications.

Mr. Chairman,

Africa is committed to promote WSIS objectives by creating enabling environment for the development of national ICT strategies through its Africa Information Society Initiative. Until now, 45 African countries have national ICT policies. Studies of policy implementation undertaken during 2012 revealed the need for improved capacity-building in policy and regulation including more systematic data gathering and analysis to promote developmental outcomes.

Moreover, we believe that enhancing intra-regional connectivity will contribute significantly to the promotion of trade, investment, tourism and development in the region for the benefit of all African Member States and our peoples.
In this regard, we stress the need to continue working together, through regional and international cooperation and public-private partnerships, to develop and promote the ICT sector, both in terms of infrastructure development and scaling up services.

Africa recognizes the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology, and in this regard encourages the United Nations development system to continue its effort to promote the use of information and communications technologies as a critical enabler of development and a catalyst for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

We also believe that ICT, as a critical enabler of development, should be considered as one of the key priorities in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, The African Group reaffirms its commitment to continue being to be actively engaged in all multilateral processes for consideration of modalities for overall review of WSIS during its sixty-eighth session.

I thank you!