Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates
Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee on this agenda item, specifically as it relates to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. (WSIS)

Today I am speaking as a representative of UNESCO which is also the current Chair of the United Nations Group on the Information Society, UNGIS.

WSIS did much to bring the potential of information technology to the forefront of thinking and decision-making. The principles agreed at WSIS provide a basis for international action to make their achievement a reality.

The United Nations Secretary-General invited UNESCO, along with two other UN bodies, ITU and UNDP, to take the lead in implementing WSIS outcomes. UNESCO has accordingly played a central role in UNGIS, which it chairs in rotation with these other UN agencies. UNESCO shares responsibility with ITU for organizing annual meetings of Action Lines in what is now called the WSIS Forum, and is itself responsible for facilitating six of these Action Lines.

UNESCO hosted in February 2013 in Paris the first WSIS+10 Review event, which was co-organized with ITU, UNDP and UNCTAD. This followed a request by UNESCO’s Member States to our Director-General at the 36th session of the General Conference in resolution 56 on the Implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes and future measures for reaching its 2015 goals.

“…to further reinforce UNESCO’s leading role in the WSIS process by organizing, inter alia, a high-level WSIS event in the lead-up to the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes in 2015…”

The WSIS+10 Review Event brought together 1500 participants from Governments, Civil Society, technical communities, private sector and other Intergovernmental Organizations. These participants from 130 countries reviewed recent trends and discussed future developments and priorities in the field of Information and Knowledge Societies, which were also reflected in a joined final statement.
When Member States took the decision at WSIS to attribute the highest number of Action Lines, altogether six, to UNESCO, it is because they recognized that infrastructure is indeed an important base, but it is the people who need to have the capabilities not just to acquire information but also to transform it into knowledge and understanding, which empowers them to enhance their livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic development of their societies. This is behind the idea of a transition from Information to inclusive Knowledge Societies, which UNESCO has been promoting.

Today, the capacities of people to use technologies, to create relevant local content, the importance of multilingualism on the Internet, and the ethical dimensions of Knowledge Societies are at least as important as the infrastructure.

New technologies have created new opportunities for the creation, preservation, dissemination and use of information, but it is human activity that enables information to be transformed into knowledge and knowledge to add value to human experience and development. UNESCO’s focus is on this human dimension of information and communication.

As UNESCO is the current Chair of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), I would also like to also bring your attention to the Joint Statement by 30 UNGIS members, which stressed the importance of ICT for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is important to link the WSIS+10 Review process and outcomes to the post-2015 development agenda -- the need to include the lessons learned from technology uses seems particularly important today.

And lastly, I would like to make a few remarks about UNESCO's Knowledge Societies concept - By Knowledge Societies, UNESCO means societies in which people have the capabilities not just to acquire information but also to transform it into knowledge and understanding, which empowers them to enhance their livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic development of their societies.

The concept of Knowledge Societies was developed throughout the WSIS process. Whereas Information Society is linked to the idea of “technological innovations”, UNESCO’s position was that the growth of network and ICT applications would not capture the full potential of ICTs for development.

It is rooted in the framework of human rights established by the Universal Declaration of 1948 and its implementing Covenants, and in the need for all to have the opportunity to access information and to express ideas and interests in an open and inclusive environment that fosters and benefits from diversity of opinion.

Thank you