UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

37th Assembly of Parties
EUTELSAT

Statement

By

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Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer
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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO greatly appreciates the invitation to address the opening ceremony of the 37th Assembly of the Parties of EUTELSAT. UNESCO has been working increasingly with EUTELSAT particularly within the framework of the Broadband Commission of which EUTELSAT is a member.

*Overview of broadband commission & EUTELSAT’s involvement*

As you may be aware, the Broadband Commission for Digital Development was launched in May 2010 by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO. The Commission counts amongst its membership government leaders from around the world, representatives from industry, international agencies, and organizations concerned with development. The Broadband Commission has been founded as a High-level advocacy group around the notion that equitable and affordable access to broadband services can be a key enabler for attaining internationally agreed development goals coupled with a strong, shared desire amongst its membership to take concrete steps to leverage technology as an enabler for attaining these goals.
As a leading global satellite operator and provider of a range of telecommunications services including mobile, Internet backbone connectivity and broadband, EUTELSAT reaches beyond Europe to access the Middle East, Africa and large parts of Asia and the Americas. EUTELSAT therefore has an important role to play in the work of the Broadband Commission and contributing to realizing the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society and the Millennium Development Goals.

*Although technology is necessary, it is insufficient to achieve the development objectives*

The potential of Information and Communication Technologies is being enhanced by accelerating technological developments worldwide in areas such as cloud and grid computing, and the increasing availability of Internet access and mobile networks and devices. The World Summit on the Information Society outcomes confirmed that innovations in ICTs provide vast new opportunities for the creation, preservation, dissemination and use of information.
However, technical connectivity and infrastructure can only serve development in conjunction with content and users. The close duality between infrastructure and content is thus an essential consideration in enabling ICTs to contribute to the building of inclusive, just and equitable “Knowledge Societies” in which knowledge is the primary resource for individual development, social engagement and economic growth.

Here I use the term “Knowledge Societies” rather than “Information Society” to stress the pluralistic and culturally diverse nature of these societies and the importance of human and ethical considerations as well as technological resources in achieving them.

As a principal force of social transformation, the spread of information and knowledge provides the key to empowerment. Networks and applications support new approaches to learning for every age, offering huge development potential in the field of education as well as in other sectors. But progress towards peace and internationally agreed development goals cannot be accelerated by connectivity and infrastructure alone. The production of and accessibility to suitable local content - be it, educational,
scientific, cultural or recreational – is essential in connecting communities and societies so that they can share information, experiences and knowledge. This of course means that we must look beyond connectivity to ensure that, among other things, cultural and linguistic diversity are fostered, freedom of expression on the Internet is respected, quality educational materials are promoted at all levels of society, and that a multi-stakeholder approach to the provision of content is ensured throughout.

_Some glimpses of what UNESCO is currently doing to support content development and use_

I would like to take a few minutes to briefly mention some of the work that UNESCO is currently undertaking to promote access to digital content and to support the abilities of citizens to use and benefit from the technology.

UNESCO through its work in encouraging the production, sharing and use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) is contributing to the availability of quality educational content. OER are learning materials that have been released under an open-content license that allows free use by others, or in
the public domain. OER can be created in local languages to meet local needs or readily adapted and repurposed.

While there has been considerable discussion about the potential that ICTs offer for transforming access to education materials as well as educational outcomes, realizing this potential even with appropriate ICTs is not as straightforward as it is often portrayed. Human facilitation, i.e. teachers, are still a very important part of this process. Without teachers having the requisite skill to better use ICTs and to integrate them into their work, the full potential of these technologies cannot be achieved. UNESCO through the establishment of an international ICT Competency Framework for Teachers has therefore supported the production and dissemination of a reference guide to enable teacher training programmes to effectively incorporate ICTs.

In order to improve access to scientific information, UNESCO has been promoting the Open Access concept whereby the costs of access to scientific literature are defrayed by information producers rather than by users. Member States are being encouraged to develop suitable policy frameworks to encourage both Open Access journals and Open Access repositories, and it
is expected that a Community of Practice around this theme will take Open Access to higher levels of acceptance by the stakeholders.

I would like to stress that local content not only helps to preserve and promote linguistic and cultural diversity, but can be leveraged to develop Internet economies nationally and locally through capacity building in the field of content production, job creation and lowering the cost of access to Internet and Broadband infrastructure.

**Closing**

In closing, I think that it is also important to remind ourselves that while improvements in ICTs and deployment of infrastructure are increasing, these are often deployed asymmetrically. Often, emphasis is given to areas where populations are higher and on the basis of well-intentioned and rational cost/benefit policies. Such approaches can contribute paradoxically to enlarging and perpetuating existing inequities in access to information and communication technologies. This in turn has negative consequences for achieving internationally agreed development goals and the creation of equitable, just knowledge societies. UNESCO through its inter-governmental
Information For All Programme, recently produced a publication "National Information Society Policy: A Template", which seeks to provide policy-makers tools in grappling with such challenges as well as ensuring the inclusion of softer elements – cultural and linguistic diversity, gender and so on – within national policies.

Given that one of the four guiding principles of EUTELSAT is universal and public service we count on your support in raising awareness of this resource amongst your members.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations during your 37th Meeting of EUTELSAT parties.

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