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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the opening of the Broadband Commission for  
Sustainable Development**

**Hong Kong, China, 16 March 2017**

His Excellency Mr Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda,

Mr Carlos Jarque, Representative of Carlos Slim Helu,

Ms Sun Yafang, Chairwoman of *Huawei Technologies*,

Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union,

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you all for attending this session of the *Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development*.

I wish to express special gratitude to Ms Sun Yafang, Chairwoman of *Huawei Technologies*, for hosting us...

This shows again how committed *Huawei Technologies* is to bridging digital divides – ... we see this in Huawei's efforts to promote ICT-based education in Ethiopia ... we saw this in Huawei's work to restore networks after the devastating earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

We are deeply grateful to His Excellency Mr Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and Mr Carlos Slim, President of the *Carlos Slim Foundation*, for their leadership.

I thank also our Co-Vice Chair, Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union – I wish to underline the excellent partnership UNESCO and the ITU have forged...

As you know, next week, UNESCO is hosting our flagship *Mobile Learning Week*, organised in partnership with UNHCR and ITU, on the theme “Education in Emergencies and Crises” – on 24 March, UNESCO and ITU are holding the *Mobile Learning Week Policy Forum* on “Harnessing E-Skills and Mobile Learning for Inclusive Sustainable Development,” for which I am grateful.

I believe the framework for all our work is clear.

It is the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

It is the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals.

This is the compass setting of all our efforts – to advance the human rights and dignity of every woman and man, as a transformational force for societies, for economies, for the planet.

The same spirit underpins this Commission – to ensure the digital revolution is a revolution for human rights, to promote ‘technological breakthroughs’ as ‘development breakthroughs.’

The Sustainable Development Goals may look like a set of idealistic objectives on paper.

They are not.

They are about concrete change for the benefit of all.

They provide a toolbox to map, measure, and advance, together.

We see ICT-specific targets in four of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals – there are 38 targets whose achievement will depend upon universal and affordable access to ICT and broadband.

To move forward, we know the divides we need to bridge...

...6 billion people without high-speed broadband.

...3.9 billion people with Internet access.

...2 billion people without a mobile phone.

Divides of access are exacerbated by divides in skills, in services and applications, in local and multilingual content ... made worse by gender divides, holding back girls and women.

These are the stakes of our mission.

Yesterday, I chaired the new *Working Group on Education*, with John Galvin of Intel – to explore the education we need to foster a new generation of ‘digital citizens,’ with the right skills to engage in society, in the economy.

We need to harness the power of new technologies, to enhance quality and widen access -- this calls for new curricula, new approaches across the education sector, and this was also the spirit of the *Qingdao Declaration on ICTs in Education* – and I draw your attention here to the recent Huawei report on *The Role of ICT in Realising Education for All by 2030*.

This is essential to reach everyone... especially girls and women.

There is today a global gender gap of 11 percent in access to the Internet – this rises to 29 percent in Least Developed Countries.

We need smart technologies to advance Sustainable Development Goal 5, “*to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*” – including the target to enhance the “*use of enabling technology, in particular ICT, to promote the empowerment of all women and girls.*”

Again, access and coverage are essential, but not enough, to close the gender gap – we must bolster skills, languages, incentives, resources.

In this spirit, we launched yesterday the Outcome Report of the *Working Group on Digital Gender Divide*, co-chaired by UNESCO and GSMA, and I thank Mats Granryd for his leadership.

This Report sets out concrete recommendations to bridge the gender gap in Internet and broadband access and use.

I believe this is, indeed, the key point.

If we do not invest directly to tackle digital divides – we run the risk of widening them...

All this highlights once again the importance of partnership, and, in this spirit, I look forward to our discussions today.

Thank you again.