

*Excellencies, Ministers,*

*It is a privilege to take part in this debate.*

*The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of many crucial aspects, among which also the facets of digital technology. It displayed once more the need for implementing digital services for our citizens, for improving citizens' digital skills and for facilitating access to technologies for everyone. It confirmed the critical role of the digitalization of the administration in creating resilient and adaptable societies. It proved the importance of ensuring the security of digital data, services and networks.*

*At the same time, it emphasized the risks and costs associated with digital divides both inside our countries and internationally, highlighting the relevance of significant investments and increasing connectivity.*

*The crisis also confirmed the role of free, independent, accountable and pluralistic media in strengthening transparency, accountability and trust. These are key ingredients in building up our resilience in face of pandemic, but also of infodemic which joined it.*

*Digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, must be human-centered, while the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, good governance, accountability and the rule of law must be provided offline and online. The UN can lead the digital cooperation at global level and play an important role in mobilizing all actors to ensure open, secure and affordable access to digital infrastructure and services for all. We fully support the UN Secretary General's initiatives in that regard.*

*The pandemic might have halted many processes, but it clearly accelerated digitalization. This is a priority for the EU, including for the Government of Romania. It is one of the reasons why Romania is an active member of the 3Seas Initiative, a regional platform for Central and Eastern Europe designed to reduce the connectivity gap, including the digital one, compared to the EU average.*

*Romania often takes pride in its internet speed, the fastest in the EU. We see digitalization as an opportunity for everyone and a key component of our economic development. The ICT sector contributes with 6-7% to Romania's GDP and we expect this contribution to grow.*

*Romania's digital transformation aims at making our country less bureaucratic, more resilient and more attractive for foreign investment. It will also make the citizens more satisfied with public services – which will help consolidate the social contract our democracy is based upon.*

*In conclusion, let me welcome Estonia and Singapore's initiative to organize this conference. Romania fully endorses the Global Declaration on the Digital Response to COVID-19.*

*Thank you!*