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Keynote Speech of
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Theme: Innovation and Partnership

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Officials, Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, I stand before you today at the confluence of urgent challenge and unprecedented opportunity.

Our nations face the urgent challenges that include climate resilience, energy security, limited resouces, and aging infrastructure. At the same time, technology has never been as advanced and seems to present an unprecedented opportunity to address these issues.

Renewable energy technologies have evolved from promising alternatives to economic imperatives.Energy storage solutions—from advanced battery systems to green hydrogen—can solve the intermittency challenges that once limited renewable adoption.

Digital technologies can revolutionize grid management, with artificial intelligence and predictive analytics optimizing operations in ways that enhance reliability while reducing costs.

Smart infrastructure can embed intelligence into our roads, bridges, water systems, and public facilities. Automated and autonomous systems can redefine maintenance and operation, extending asset lifespans while reducing operational costs.

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And Digital modeling and simulation tools allow us to optimize designs before breaking ground. Technology can do all that but, alone, it is insufficient to meet the challenges I mentioned above.

I put it to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that it is only through the synergistic collaboration between public vision and private ingenuity that technological innovations can achieve their true potential at scale.

Technological possibilities, however transformative, require the private sector's involvement to move them from innovation to implementation… and this is where well-structured Public-Private Partnerships become essential.

Through their characteristic outcome-based specification rather than the prescriptive approach of traditional public procurement, PPPs create the space for technology use and innovation. By focusing on what must be achieved rather than how it must be done, governments can invite creative solutions that may exceed their initial conceptions.

Long-term concession models inherent in many PPPs create powerful incentives for lifecycle thinking—where design, construction, operation, and eventual renewal are considered holistically. This integrated perspective naturally favors efficiency and the use of technology to cut costs and improve results.

Risk-sharing mechanisms within PPPs can enable the deployment of emerging technologies that might otherwise remain untested at scale – witness the US PPPs that allowed Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna to develop and distribute their Covid vaccines.

For Public-Private Partnerships to fully enable technological innovation, certain governance principles must be present in the relevant legislative and regulatory framework:
First, partnerships must be able to balance stability with adaptability. Innovation requires sufficient certainty to justify investment, yet sufficient flexibility to incorporate emerging technologies both in new and ongoing projects.

Second, partnerships must incorporate transparent performance metrics that reward innovation. When private partners can capture a portion of the value created through technological improvement, continuous innovation becomes an economic incentive rather than merely an aspiration.

Finally, partnerships must maintain unwavering focus on public benefit. Technology and partnership structures are means to an end—the enhancement of human well-being through more effective, more sustainable, and more equitable infrastructure and energy systems.

Around the world, we see compelling evidence of how the combination of technological innovation and effective partnership through PPP delivers transformative results:
In India, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation utilized a PPP framework that incentivized the private consortium to exceed environmental standards, resulting in the world's first rail system to earn carbon credits under the UN Clean Development Mechanism.

In Chile, innovative reverse auction PPP mechanisms enabled record-breaking low prices for solar energy and substantially transformed the nation's energy matrix.

In Barcelona, Spain, an IoT-enabled PPP smart lighting system dropped city energy consumption by 40% thanks to adaptive lighting that dims when streets are empty.

In Kigali, Rwanda, a SCADA system project allowed remote monitoring of water quality and distribution.

In Sydney, Australia, a metro rail PPP project using driverless trains provided 99% on-time performance.I can go on and on.

As we look to the future, I propose that we approach innovation and partnership as complementary forces rather than separate domains:
Let us evolve our procurement frameworks to explicitly value and incentivize innovation—creating space for technologies yet unimagined while maintaining accountability for results.

Let us develop new risk-sharing models appropriate for emerging technologies—models that recognize the uncertainty inherent in innovation while creating conditions for prudent experimentation.

The World Association of Public-Private Partnership Units and Professionals, of which I am President, today has 64 governments as members, including the governments of the UAE, Kuwait, and the Gambia. We stand ready to work with you and with all governments and private sector companies everywhere in order to achieve these objectives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,The dual forces of technological innovation and strategic partnership, operating together, offer us unprecedented capacity to address our most pressing challenges. Neither force alone is sufficient—it is their integration that will enable the transformation our nations require.

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The energy systems and infrastructure we design today will shape our societies for generations. They will either constrain or enable our children's prosperity, security, and well-being. The stakes could not be higher, nor the opportunity more profound.

As leaders entrusted with stewardship of our nations' critical systems, we have both the privilege and the responsibility to harness these dual forces—innovation and partnership—toward the common good. Let us proceed with wisdom, with courage, and with conviction that through this unified approach, we can build a future worthy of those we serve.

Ends.