



## ITU's INPUT

2016 Integration Segment Theme: "Implementing the 2030 Agenda through Policy Innovation and Integration"

The declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (paragraph 15), recognizes that "the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy".

ICTs, including broadband and the Internet, are a strong and powerful tool for bringing about transformative solutions for sustainable development. From poverty reduction and food security, to governance, health, education, gender equality and enabling a low-carbon economy, ICTs are helping advancing a more equitable, inclusive and environmentally healthy world. ICTs are cross-cutting catalysts for all three pillars of sustainable development.

In terms of economic growth, developing countries must engage with development of the digital economy to upgrade production processes and maximize their long-term growth opportunities in the tertiary services sector. ICTs are also a high-growth sector for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises in tech hubs that can power economic growth and stimulate economic development. However, there is growing evidence that the efficiency and productivity savings of ICTs may not be accompanied by growth in skilled jobs, or may even be accelerating structural shifts within economies, resulting in some, or net, job losses in some countries.

In terms of social inclusion, social networking services are expanding the reach, volume and speed of networks and social interactions, even if some observers herald growing risks and regret a loss in the quality of relationships. For environmental sustainability, energy-efficient ICTs and smart cities could reduce energy consumption significantly and contribute to cleaner economic growth. Energy-efficient ICTs can be leveraged across many different sectors of the economy to deliver significant savings in carbon emissions. However, the ICT sector is a significant growth sector in its own right, with growing energy needs of its own.

Comprehensive and coordinated policy-making in ICTs can help empower communities and individuals and boost development. The digital divide between and within countries, and between women and men, remains a major challenge that needs to be addressed, including through improving and equalizing data literacy and technology know-how. Cybersecurity and data privacy have gained prominence with the wider use of digital technologies in all spheres of life. Additionally, the impact of technology on the environment is known to be both positive and negative. All of these trends require further exploration and analysis.

Some key facts:

- Global Internet connectivity, specifically global broadband connectivity, is a significant enabler to achieve the sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations.
- Access to the Internet is the backbone of the Knowledge Societies that fuel today's digital economies, cultures and education systems.
- Currently, only about 3.2 billion people are online. That's less than half of the world's population.
- In Least Developed Countries, fewer than one in every ten are online.
- Just as importantly, meaningful Internet access requires relevant affordable access and content, available in the right language and offering the capability to transform information into actionable knowledge.
- Only about 5% of existing languages are accessible online
- Meaningful access goes beyond mere connectivity to Internet and mobile infrastructure; without the appropriate skills and capacity, people cannot fully benefit from access to ICTs.
- The estimated 781 million illiterate adults and almost 100 million children without complete primary education are not able to effectively navigate today's complex websites.
- ITU's goal is to make sure the next 1.5 billion people are connected and have meaningful access to the Internet by 2020, in line with the goal of connecting 60% of individuals to the Internet by 2020 – a central target of the Connect 2020 Agenda set by the 193 Member States of the ITU.

#### Key Barriers

- The need for affordable access to broadband
- Overcoming challenges to rolling out the required network infrastructure and related financing models
- Creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment
- Stimulating the development of local and relevant content and services
- Developing the capacities of people, including their media and information literacy
- Understanding the impact of Internet access in terms of sociocultural developments economic growth and environmental sustainability
- Special attention must be paid to enhancing ICT access and skills for the most marginalized groups, including girls and women, and persons with disabilities

#### What is required

- The guiding principle must consist in an all-inclusive approach, leaving no one behind.
- Partnerships across multiple sectors are required. No single entity can achieve this important goal and address all of these challenges.
- Investment and viable financing models
- Important industry-driven initiatives
- Recognize that ICTs are strategic factors and need to be systematically integrated in the development plans as well as programme priorities. Renewed efforts should be made to ensure that the ICT dimension is adequately reflected in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and in Poverty Reduction Strategies.

#### Partnerships

**The ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development:** With members drawn from a range of sectors, including the global technology industry, government ministers, leaders in education and healthcare, and UN organizations, the Commission has developed a significant body

of research into national policy-making for broadband and ICTs. The Commission is committed to ensuring that common goals of global Internet access are fully coordinated and mutually reinforcing, with the aim of maximizing the potential that connectivity can bring to achieve global sustainable development. All three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection – need ICTs as key catalysts. That is why the Commission believes that ICTs, and particularly broadband, will be absolutely crucial for achieving the SDGs. New technologies are a transformational force to build inclusive knowledge societies. The power of broadband to leapfrog development roadblocks and bring access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities should put high-speed information and communication technology (ICT) network roll-out at the top of every country's SDG strategy.

**World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS):** ITU, in close collaboration with the UN Family, has been working with all stakeholders and Action Line Facilitators towards a close alignment between the WSIS process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The WSIS Forum has been a valuable platform through which all stakeholders review the implementation of WSIS outcomes. Beyond 2015, the WSIS Forum will build upon the outcomes of the UNGA Overall Review, which recognized the necessity of holding this Forum on an annual basis and which called for a close alignment between WSIS and SDG processes. In this context, WSIS Forum will serve as a key forum for discussing the role of ICTs as a means of implementation of the SDGs and targets, with due regard to the global mechanism for follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2015, A WSIS-SDG Matrix was developed by UN WSIS Action Line Facilitators and coordinated by the ITU, which has been widely appreciated by the stakeholders engaged in the WSIS and the SDG process. The matrix will further serve as the mechanism to map, analyse and coordinate the implementation of WSIS Action Lines, and more specifically, ICTs as enablers and accelerators of the SDGs.