

ITU'S INPUTS TO THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT

In 2003 and 2005, through the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society ([A/RES/56/183](#)), nearly 50 heads of states and hundreds of ministers and high-level representatives from 175 countries, together with thousands of multistakeholder participants, endorsed the [Declaration of WSIS Principles](#) and [WSIS Action Lines](#) to establish the foundations for an information society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake.

Since the WSIS Summit, new technologies and services have been constantly and dramatically emerging, adding to the range and diversity of applications and potential of digital technologies on all aspects of economy, society and development. On the one hand, global experience since the WSIS Summit has shown how difficult it is to anticipate the pace at which specific technologies will be adopted, and therefore to develop appropriate policies and principles to maximize potential benefits and mitigate potential risks. On the other hand, experience especially during the COVID-19 pandemic has proved how digital technologies could influence, improve, and impinge on inter-society solidarity and our joint success.

The 'Global Digital Compact' has been proposed to build global frameworks, agreements or key principles on major digital issues. The key principles for digital technologies can vary depending on the context a specific goal(s) of the nations, groups, or organizations, but generally they should promote an inclusive, responsible, and sustainable use of digital technologies for all.

1. CONNECT ALL PEOPLE TO THE INTERNET, INCLUDING ALL SCHOOLS

Connectivity is essential for enabling the full potential of digital technologies and for ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation are realized by all. At [the Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU held in Bucharest in 2022](#), Member States strongly reiterated the critical role of connectivity for sustainable development, and approved new goals and targets for the Union, along with updated priorities for advancing towards "universal connectivity" and "sustainable digital transformation" outlining the ITU strategic Plan.

Also in [the Bucharest Declaration on "Building A Better Digital Future for All"](#) (25 September 2022), ICT Ministers urgently called for immediate actions to accelerate connectivity and better digital future. Clearly, achieving universal and meaningful connectivity is a global challenge that requires global commitments to address it. One of the major international commitments to fully exploit the opportunities provided by digital transformation of various sectors of the economy and supporting all relevant stakeholders is [the Kigali Declaration](#) adopted by ITU Member States at [the World Development Conference \(WTDC-22\)](#) under the theme 'Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development'.

1.2. CORE PRINCIPLES

In particular, the global principles aiming to achieve universal and meaningful connectivity¹ should include:

- **Availability:** Connectivity should be available everywhere, including remote and rural areas, to ensure that everyone has access to the opportunities and benefits of the digital technologies.

¹ [Achieving universal and meaningful digital connectivity: setting a baseline and targets for 2030](#), UN Office of Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and ITU, April 2022.

- **Inclusiveness:** Connectivity should enable participation of all individuals and communities in the digital world, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, people with special needs, older persons, indigenous communities, and marginalized groups.
- **Meaningfulness:** Connectivity should provide users with a secure, enjoyable, valuable and efficient online experience that is affordable and accessible to all. It is essential to balance universal connectivity and meaningful connectivity, as neither one alone can result in significant societal benefits.
- **Affordability:** Connectivity should be affordable and accessible to all, regardless of location, socio-economic status, or other factors.
- **Quality:** Connectivity should be reliable, with sufficient speed, quality, and stability to support the use of digital technologies for various purposes, including education, health, commerce, and social interaction.
- **Interoperability:** Connectivity should be interoperable, allowing different systems, technologies and devices to work together seamlessly, and enabling the free flow of information across borders and platforms.
- **Security and Resilience:** Connectivity should be secure and resilient, protecting against cyber-threats (protecting the most vulnerable, including children), data breaches, unauthorized access and other forms of malicious uses, as well as physical risks, including natural disasters.
- **Sustainability:** The development and deployment of connectivity infrastructure should be sustainable, environmentally responsible, and support the urgent need to address the climate crisis.

1.2. COMMITMENTS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN BY STAKEHOLDERS

Key ingredients or commitments necessary for achieving universal meaningful connectivity in accordance with the principles above include:

- **Assessing policy, regulation and governance:** Connectivity should be supported by future-oriented policies and collaborative regulatory frameworks to leverage the power of connectivity to build innovation-driven digital ecosystem, facilitate new and emerging technologies for sustainable development, while effectively managing and mitigating potential harms.
- **Enhancing investment:** Investment in connectivity should focus on all stages of development and deployment and take into consideration interlinkages between the connectivity and broader digital transformation. It should also be supported by a multi-faceted approach with policy interventions to encourage financial investments for the physical infrastructure, such as broadband networks, to improve connectivity in underserved areas.
- **Being equipped with skills:** Citizens should be provided with the necessary digital skills to make use of connectivity for their social and economic well-being. Thus, investment in connectivity should also cover investment in education and training to achieve a digitally skilled population.
- **Building inclusive digital societies:** The preservation and promotion of diverse cultural identities and linguistic diversity through local digital content development is an important foundation of inclusive digital societies. It will enhance social and economic development and stimulate participation of all stakeholders, including vulnerable groups and people living in rural and remote areas.
- **Strengthening data ecosystems:** Data and measurement are critical for all nations to achieve towards universal and meaningful connectivity. They are needed to conduct a proper diagnosis and design effective, tailored, and targeted interventions and monitor progress. Yet, good, reliable, actionable data and statistics remain desperately scant.
- **Accelerating innovation:** Countries can overcome digital development challenges by leveraging cutting-edge approaches to digital innovation, such as developing locally appropriate technical

capabilities through experimentation and flagship initiatives, while incentivizing and promoting responsible tech-led innovation for digital entrepreneurship across economic sectors.

- **Strengthening partnership:** To achieve universal, meaningful and accessible connectivity, it is essential to foster partnerships and collaborations between governments, private sector, academia, civil society, and international organizations, creating synergies, pooling resources and coordinating efforts across the ecosystem. The development and implementation of connectivity solutions require leveraging the expertise and resources of multiple stakeholders.

2. AVOID INTERNET FRAGMENTATION

2.1. CORE PRINCIPLES

The multistakeholder community came together in 2003 and 2005 to formulate the WSIS principles and advance multistakeholder cooperation. Nearly two decades later, with the Internet now a critical part of our lives (for many of us), and our economies, we face new challenges, including relating to security and privacy, risks to marginalized populations, lack of conformance to international technical standards, rise of geopolitical tensions, and several others.

If not addressed in a timely manner, these challenges could lead to the fragmentation of the Internet as we now know it. The key to overcoming these challenges lies in coming together and working collectively as a multistakeholder community, in a spirit of openness and cooperation. Some core principles towards this goal could be derived from the ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 102 on *ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and the management of Internet resources, including domain names and addresses*:

- that the Internet promises social, economic, cultural and environmental development that can bring out the best in humanity;
- that increased availability of online services will contribute to bringing sustainable social and economic development to all the world's inhabitants;
- that emerging telecommunications/ICTs will transform both the Internet and the digital economy and will have an impact on overall achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, and therefore extension of the benefits of new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants must be promoted;
- that there is a need for preserving and promoting multilingualism on the Internet for an integrating and inclusive information society;
- that the management of the Internet encompasses both technical and public policy issues and should involve all stakeholders and relevant intergovernmental and international organizations;
- that the management of the Internet is a subject of valid international interest and must flow from full international and multistakeholder cooperation on the basis of the outcomes of the two phases of WSIS; and
- that, as stated in the WSIS outcomes, all governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance and for ensuring the stability, security and continuity of the existing Internet and its future development and of the future Internet, and that there is a need for development of public policy by governments in consultation with all stakeholders.

2.2. COMMITMENTS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN BY STAKEHOLDERS

ITU firmly believes that multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration is the cornerstone of a truly inclusive and empowering global digital space. ITU Plenipotentiary Conference Resolution 64 on *Non-*

discriminatory access to telecommunication/information and communication technology facilities, services and applications, including applied research and transfer of technology, and e-meetings, on mutually agreed terms also invites Member States **“to refrain from taking any unilateral and/or discriminatory actions that could impede technically another Member State from having full access to the Internet, within the spirit of Article 1 of the ITU Constitution and the WSIS principles”**.

ITU, as the specialized UN agency for ICTs, offers numerous opportunities for various stakeholders to convene and gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges in the ICT sector and the solutions needed. These opportunities include the [WSIS Forum](#), as well as ITU’s [Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues](#) (CWG-Internet), among others.

3. APPLY HUMAN RIGHTS ONLINE

3.1. CORE PRINCIPLES

Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires global solutions that can leverage the power of digital to drive progress. Increasingly, as society, economy and technology become inextricably linked, these efforts and initiatives need to be designed holistically and grounded in human rights. **The right of the public to access international telecommunication services is recognized in ITU’s Constitution**, with certain conditions defined under which services can be stopped. The [International Telecommunication Regulations](#) (ITRs) also contain provisions regarding the right to means of communication.

3.2. COMMITMENTS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN BY STAKEHOLDERS

The core tenet of ITU’s work on connectivity is focused on developmental values and rights, placing a special emphasis on the inclusion of women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous communities, other marginalized groups, and people in remote and rural areas.

In addition, the interplay between technical standards and human rights is also important to highlight. **Technical standards underpin and help technologies work together, making them safer, more accessible, more affordable, and more sustainable.** As an international standards-making body, ITU is cognizant of the importance of considering potential human rights impacts at the design and development stage of technical standards as well. This relationship has been recognized by the Human Rights Council as well, and it has called for closer cooperation between the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights and Standards Development Organizations including the ITU ([Res. 47/23](#)).

In 2022, the Global Youth Summit process convened by ITU produced a [Youth Call to Action ‘My digital future’](#) also calling for **‘[u]phold[ing] human rights online and develop frameworks for navigating the internet safely, expressing oneself freely, requiring consent for online transactions, accessing social and economic opportunities and creating value using digital technologies, tools and the internet’**.

4. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

4.1. CORE PRINCIPLES

The [Sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Forum \(WTPF-21\)](#) organized by ITU in December 2021 agreed² that:

- the responsible development and use of new and emerging technologies, particularly AI, can help to empower future innovation and address related policy issues, and that stakeholders involved in their development and use should engage in policy discussions, including on accountability and sustainable development;
- that it is important to promote building confidence and security in and inclusive development of these technologies as well as to foster equitable access to their benefits;
- that enabling strategies, policies, regulations, guidelines or principles may contribute to maximizing the potential of such technologies to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;
- that all stakeholders need to work closely together to harness the potential of such services and technologies for the benefit of all and to advance sustainable development, as well as address any common policy issues and other challenges, *inter alia*, related to confidence and security, reliability, inclusiveness, transparency and interoperability, that may arise in their use; and
- that stakeholders should be encouraged to implement projects, programmes, and initiatives to enable all nations to benefit from the use of such technologies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.2. COMMITMENTS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN BY STAKEHOLDERS

Give the role that AI is expected to play in our globally interconnected digital future, one of the key challenges before us now is how to maximize the benefits and opportunities that AI presents, while mitigating the associated risks and challenges. Cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration will be key.

In Opinion 4 of WTPF-21, all stakeholders have been invited to work collaboratively:

- to utilize the potential of relevant new and emerging technologies, such as AI, to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs to achieve the SDGs;
- to promote public policies and strategies at the national, regional, and international levels to take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges in the use and mobilization of technologies above for sustainable development; and
- to encourage the participation of all stakeholders from developing countries, and in particular from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in the activities of relevant entities, organizations, institutions and initiatives that are working on the various policy matters set out in this Opinion,

The [Best Practice Guidelines of ITU's Global Symposium for Regulators \(GSR\)](#) adopted by the global community of regulators provide guidance to national ICT and digital sector and cross-sector regulators and policy makers overseeing ICT and digital markets. In the increasingly complex and dynamic digital transformation, it is important to agree on common principles and put forward clear and simple rules, such as:

- **Multiple formats and modes of regulation are required to incentivize the development and adoption of new and emerging technologies.** Formal regulation should leave sufficient space

² [WTPF-21 Opinion 4: New and emerging technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development](#)

for self-regulation, hybrid and collaborative regulatory models and oversight mechanisms for law enforcement. From incentives and rewards through forbearance to targeted obligations, the range of tools and remedies at hand for regulators to explore is wide. New issues call for novel approaches and the regulatory canvas has expanded to cover regulatory sandboxes, ethical frameworks, technology roadmaps, regulatory impact assessment, multi-varied research and big data simulation in exploring the most balanced, proportionate and fair regulatory response. Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and online disinformation are some of the complex issues waiting to be addressed.

- **Policies and regulations need to provide the necessary guardrails to ensure an open, inclusive and transparent digital environment.** Regulatory decision-making processes should encourage broad participation of stakeholders, including those from industry, academia, civil society and local governments, through formal and informal channels. Throughout the development and implementation of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things, regulated entities and regulators should share responsibility for the development, monitoring and implementation of rules and guidelines.
- **Data shielding:** Clear, strong and enforceable rules related to data governance can provide adequate shield for digital consumer protection while creating a predictable, structured framework for doing digital business. State-of-the-art regulatory protocols and mechanisms can go a long way towards enhancing trust in the digital ecosystem, such as the commitment to comply with requirements related to the access to non-personal data retained by digital platforms, transparency of certain essential algorithms used by digital services, portability of essential data of structuring platforms, interoperability and maintenance of APIs (application programming interfaces).

ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 214 (Bucharest, 2022) on *Artificial Intelligence technologies and telecommunications/information and communication technologies* also recognized that fully realizing the benefits of AI technologies will require bridging digital divides and achieving universal access to telecommunications/ICTs, and that the development of AI brings both opportunities and challenges.

ANNEX 1: WSIS FORUM 2023 INPUT TO THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT



WSIS Forum 2023 Input to the Global Digital Compact

The [WSIS Forum 2023](#) hybrid week was held from 13 to 17 March in Geneva, Switzerland, under the theme of *WSIS Action Lines for building back better and accelerating the achievement of the SDGs*. The Forum's hybrid week welcomed more than 2,700 participants attending both onsite and remotely from over 150 countries. The hybrid week comprised over 250 sessions with innovative formats, including open space talks, country workshops, knowledge cafes, round table discussions, and many more. The WSIS Forum 2023 Chairperson is H.E. Dr Emilija Stojmenova Duh, Minister of Digital Transformation, Slovenia.

The high-level track had a significant presence of 46 Ministers, 50 Ambassadors, and 15 Mayors from various countries around the world, discussing implementation of the WSIS process and its Action Lines, advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to the Global Digital Compact and other global processes. The event also recognized outstanding contributions in the field of information and communication technology by awarding stakeholders for their contributions to various topics, including innovation in healthy ageing, digital service design, generation connect and e-government activities. The WSIS Forum 2023 continues with virtual workshops from April to May 2023. Highlights, outcomes, and achievements of all the sessions of the WSIS Forum 2023 are available [online](#).

This year's hybrid week had several innovative session formats and featured around **250 sessions organized by multistakeholders** (governments, private sector, civil society, academia, international organizations and technical community), including open space talks, thematic workshops, country workshops, WSIS Action Lines Facilitation Meetings, knowledge cafes, WSIS Prizes, high-level track sessions, and many more. The stakeholders appreciated the new innovative formats, which fostered more participatory and collaborative exchanges with engaging dialogues. **30+ exhibitions spaces** showcased ICTs for sustainable development. The [United Nations Group on the Information Society \(UNGIS\)](#) reiterated its commitment to the WSIS process and WSIS Action Lines implementation as well as to strengthen the alignment of the WSIS and SDG processes. UNGIS members discussed the preparation of an action plan to leverage the profile of UNGIS and to contribute to other global processes on digital for development issues, including the Global Digital Compact.

The WSIS Forum 2023 also provided a platform for **multistakeholder discussions** on the **Global Digital Compact**. The co-facilitators of the GDC, H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete, Ambassador of Rwanda, and H.E. Ms. Anna Karin Eneström, Ambassador of Sweden, were present at the WSIS Forum and had the opportunity to interact and listen to the views of multistakeholders on the future on GDC and the importance of the WSIS process beyond 2025. Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, was also present at the Forum.

WSIS Forum 2023 Ambassadors Roundtable Input

The WSIS Forum 2023 Ambassadors roundtable discussion took place on 13 March 2023, featuring approximately 50 Ambassadors to UN in Geneva, where they deliberated on the following topics:

- Leveraging the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the need to bring about an inclusive, prosperous, sustainable, safe and trusted digital future for all;
- Meaningful communication and Geneva community's role in effective implementation of UN Processes.
- WSIS+20 review process and the future of WSIS beyond 2025 – identifying emerging trends, challenges and opportunities for implementing the WSIS Action Lines.
- WSIS+20 review and the Global Digital Compact (GDC)
 - GDC discussions could consider ongoing multistakeholder discussions on WSIS+20. The WSIS Action Lines are particularly important as they capture emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges in the digital world beyond 2025. WSIS Forum will continue to play an important role in digitalization.
 - Global Digital Compact process must reflect the needs of developing countries to create more equitable prosperity and reduce structural inequalities. Questions on the GDC process, including its linkages with the Summit of the Future, were raised. Mexico informed that during the GDC discussions in Mexico, the imperative of closing the digital divides was discussed to produce tangible elements to be included in the future Global Digital Compact to be adopted at the Summit of the Future in 2024.
 - To avoid duplication, the WSIS+20, Global Digital Compact, and Summit of the Future should be synergized. Some highlighted strengthening the role and contribution of the Geneva community towards can contribute to Global Digital Compact discussions with Sweden, Rwanda, and the UN Tech Envoy. WSIS+20 is important to achieve the common goal of connecting humanity.

WSIS Forum 2023 Ministerial Roundtable: WSIS Forum 2023 Chairperson's Concluding Summary

The Ministerial Roundtable at the WSIS Forum 2023 (13-17 March), benefited from the presence and contributions of 40 Ministers/Deputies. In an innovative format with 3 breakout rooms chaired by Ministers (Gambia, Philippines, UAE), 3 topics were discussed:

- ICTs rescuing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development WSIS Action Lines for building back better and accelerating the achievement of the SDGs
- **World Summit Information Society Ministerial Contribution to the Global Digital Compact Consultations**
- Exploring the Potential of Space for all as a Driver of Sustainable Development

The Ministerial roundtable of WSIS Forum 2023 concluded with the following:

1. They emphasized that harnessing the power of digital will be vital to rescuing the SDGs. ICTs are a powerful tool that should be fully leveraged towards this goal. The WSIS process provides an existing and well-functioning framework for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.

2. They invited all stakeholders to harness the power of digital and leverage the alignment between the WSIS process and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, as well as the SDG Digital Day to accelerate the achievement the SDGs.

3. They recognized that discussions on Our Common Agenda and especially its Global Digital Compact are complementary to the WSIS Framework. Therefore, they invited all stakeholders to leverage the learnings of the implementation of the WSIS Framework and related process in their deliberations of Our Common Agenda.

4. They recognized the enormous potential that Space holds in global efforts to connect the unconnected and beyond. Thus, they invited all stakeholders to work together to ensure that Space is leveraged in a safe and sustainable manner.

ANNEX 2: BUCHAREST DECLARATION ON "BUILDING A BETTER DIGITAL FUTURE FOR ALL", ADOPTED AT THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE, BUCHAREST, 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

BUCHAREST DECLARATION
"BUILDING A BETTER DIGITAL FUTURE FOR ALL"

We, the Ministers and high representatives of Member States of the International Telecommunication Union, representing 52 countries from all regions worldwide, met today, on 25 September 2022, in Bucharest, Romania, at the Ministerial Roundtable, ahead of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022, at the kind invitation of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization of the Government of Romania, to further collective action in accelerating digital transformation, universal connectivity and digital inclusion to address the growing digital divide and ensure no one is left behind.

As the pace of technological development accelerates and the world becomes increasingly interconnected, it is imperative to consider common international approaches to unlock the full potential of a digital economy and society, while empowering people with the skills to navigate it confidently. Digitalization is a critical enabler of innovation, competitiveness and development, making it a key driver of economic prosperity.

As stated in the UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation: "Future generations will judge whether the present generation seized the opportunities presented by the age of digital interdependence. The time to act is now."

This "Declaration on Building a Better Digital Future for All" is a call to action to affirm and share our commitment: **a)** to ensure an Open, Reliable, and Secure Internet for all; **b)** to enable and foster universal access to affordable, high-quality and secure telecommunications/ ICTs for all (Universal Connectivity); **c)** to foster equitable and inclusive use of telecommunications/ICTs to empower people and societies for sustainable development (Sustainable Digital Transformation); **d)** to collaborate closely with related global and regional organizations to catalyze efforts towards an inclusive, connected, sustainable and secure digital economy and society; and, **e)** to raise ambition for our contribution in addressing the climate crisis.

1. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to achieve universal, secure, inclusive and affordable access to the Internet for all.
2. We will strengthen our efforts in the design and advance implementation of future-oriented policies to leverage the power of connectivity and facilitate new and emerging telecommunications/ ICTs for sustainable development.
3. We will develop and adopt strategies and policies to increase the uptake of digital technology and to define coherent actions that address ongoing and future challenges.

4. We will prioritize policies that build sustainable, innovation-driven digital ecosystems to empower all people and to ensure that no one is left behind, fostering inclusiveness and equality.
5. We will join forces to promote meaningful youth engagement, as well as gender, inclusiveness and accessibility in the decision-making processes concerning the development of the ICT sector, thus increasing innovation and job opportunities.
6. We will shed light on the need to promote more diversified sources of financing for capacity development, digital skills and competencies, to improve overall readiness of all citizens to engage in and benefit from the digital economy.
7. We remain fully committed to promote digital literacy for all and stress the need to increase educational investment. In support of a digital-first future, we are determined to partner with other stakeholders to invest in digital literacy, digital public services and local content, in an effort to bring us closer together, not further apart.
8. We recognize the urgency of strong political commitment and concrete steps to address climate change and to support research and deployment of emerging and innovative digital technologies to help mitigate their effects on our societies while building a sustainable future.
9. We will commit to apply these principles at national, regional and global levels and use them as guidance for further collective actions, transforming them into tangible results, while respecting each other and our international legal obligations. By fulfilling these commitments, we can achieve concrete reforms and establish a valuable framework for building an inclusive digital future for all.
10. We commit ourselves to seize this opportunity through change, in order to make a meaningful impact in our society and build momentum for a positive future for all.

We commit to work together by upholding these key principles, which can be used as a guidance for policy makers, as well as citizens, businesses, and all relevant stakeholders.

We are fully aware of our role as governments in encouraging digital innovations and in fostering the development of digital technologies for a sustainable, inclusive economy and society. With our declaration today, we continue to contribute to the achievement of the ITU Connect 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.



ITU WTDC
KIGALI2022

6-16 June 2022
Kigali, Rwanda

WTDC DECLARATION

We, the high-level representatives of ITU Member States, delegates and participants endorse the present Declaration at the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, which took place in Kigali, Rwanda from 6 to 16 June 2022 under the theme "Connecting the Unconnected to Achieve Sustainable Development".

We declare that:

1. Telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the foundation for every economic sector and a catalyst for improving peoples' lives by way of social inclusion, decent employment and personal growth. Yet, in 2021 some 2.9 billion people remain unconnected, and for them, the transformative power of telecommunications/ICTs remains untapped.
2. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has introduced many challenges and changed the way we live, work, learn and do business. In the digital era, universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity is indispensable and provides opportunities for boosting productivity and efficiency, ending poverty, improving livelihoods and ensuring that sustainable development becomes a reality for all. Continuing to build confidence, trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs remains of vital importance.

3. Inequalities remain and continue to widen in the use of data and digital ICT-centric technologies, and in the digitally skilled human resources between regions, between and within countries in urban and rural areas, and between women and men. We recognize that available, affordable, dependable and accessible ICTs when leveraged through adequate digital skills can provide powerful drivers for development and are instrumental in timely, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Capacity building/development in different ICT areas, including spectrum management, remains a challenge.
4. Digital inclusion is a necessity, and insufficient digital capacity and lack of digital skills are core barriers to digital transformation and the digital economy. The demand for digitally skilled workers will increase with the accelerated move towards digital transformation. While many jobs have been and will be lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation and the digital economy can nurture new ICT-centric jobs. Education and capacity building for youth, and their access to digital skills and tools, are essential for youth engagement in shaping the digital future.
5. We have just eight years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and telecommunications/ICTs are agents of change that can shape the future for the better. Telecommunications/ICTs are instrumental in multistakeholder activities and sharing best practices as prescribed by the World Summit on the Information Society. Multistakeholder cooperation offers a platform for all to join forces, seize opportunities and leverage innovations offered by efficient new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, while mitigating risks, so that progress towards sustainable development can be made collectively.
6. Developing countries, and in particular least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), face additional challenges in mobilizing sufficient investment and financing for telecommunications/ICTs and digital infrastructures and require substantial support to provide universal, secure, reliable and affordable telecommunications/ICTs.

We commit to:

- a. Accelerating the expansion and use of efficient and up-to-date digital infrastructures, services and applications for building and further developing the digital economy, including mobilization of financial resources for providing universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity to the unconnected as soon as possible. This will also include promoting investments in broadband infrastructure deployment, adoption and access with a view to supporting sustainable development, encouraging cooperation among Member States and creating alliances and partnerships between public and private sectors, international funding agencies and other stakeholders.
- b. Urgently mitigating the impact of disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic by building digital resilience through bold and innovative national plans and recovery strategies for ensuring governance, business, education and social-life continuity. This includes providing the necessary platforms and networks for essential activities such as teleworking, e-commerce, remote learning, telemedicine and digital financial services, while paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, the elderly and children, and at the same time preparing the ground for future developments in the post-COVID-19 era. In doing so, we commit to co-create a secure, simplified and standards-based, well-coordinated approach in order to implement human-centered digital solutions that will empower individuals and businesses, while improving social well-being. We are also fully committed to tackling environmental and climate-change issues, notably in implementing telecommunication/ICT tools to mitigate the impact of climate change and addressing the impact of telecommunications/ICTs on the environment, in collaboration with users, the private sector, policy-makers and regulators.
- c. Promoting sound, open, transparent, collaborative and future-proof policy and regulatory decisions with a view to facilitating digital transformation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We will implement innovative strategies and policy/regulatory initiatives to bridge the widening digital divides by enabling universal, secure and affordable broadband connectivity and promoting increased digital inclusion, while enhancing confidence and security

ANNEX 4: ITU'S COMMITMENTS ON CONNECTIVITY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

ITU's vision is an information and digital society, empowered by the interconnected world, where telecommunication/ICTs enable and accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone. As the specialized UN agency for ICTs, **ITU's mission** is to promote, facilitate and foster affordable and universal access to telecommunication/ICT networks, services and applications and their use for social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development.

To work towards this vision and mission, ITU has a common strategy and accountability framework, called '**Connect 2030**'. [The Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development](#) focuses on how technological advances can contribute to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. With the five goals: i) Growth, ii) Inclusiveness, iii) Sustainability, iv) Innovation and v) Partnership, the Connect 2030 Agenda is linked to ITU's overall Strategic Plan, ensuring that technology serves humanity and the planet.

The **Kigali Action Plan** adopted at the [WTDC-22](#) constitutes one of the main engines of a forward-looking agenda to address the global connectivity gap along with a set of key WTDC resolutions³, including the five priorities for ITU Development Sector (ITU-D): i) Affordable connectivity, ii) Digital transformation, iii) Enabling policy and regulatory environment, iv) Resource mobilization and international cooperation, and v) Enabling environment. A set of initiatives, including [the ones for six regions of ITU](#), adopted by WTDC guide ITU implementation efforts and countries themselves in developing and implementing specific projects to address priority needs in the area of ICTs and digital development.

- **CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES:** The [Partner2Connect Digital Coalition \(P2C\)](#) is a global alliance launched by ITU in 2021 in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and the UN-OHRLS. The Coalition provides an open platform for resources, commitments and partnerships to be mobilized with the objective of fostering meaningful connectivity and digital transformation globally, in the hardest-to-connect communities, including those LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. To date, the coalition has mobilized some 600 pledges coming from over 280 entities around the world, totalling nearly USD 30 billion in value for extending meaningful connectivity, with financial or in-kind commitments addressing key issues like infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital skills, inclusion, and socio-economic transformation.

[Giga](#) is an ITU-UNICEF initiative dedicated to connecting every school in the world to the Internet, and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice. Giga's work includes: 1) mapping the location of schools and monitoring their connectivity status in real time; 2) planning the infrastructure, policies, regulations, and investments needed to deliver sustainable school connectivity; 3) designing solutions to finance the capital and operational costs of connecting schools; and 4) supporting governments to contract connectivity for schools. As of December 2022, Giga has helped connect more than 5,700 schools and 2.2 million children across 19 countries. Giga has also mapped 2.1 million schools across 137 countries.

- **CONNECTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE MAPPING:** In the area of infrastructure and network development, identifying connectivity gaps in ICT and digital infrastructures is key. The [ITU](#)

³ Notably, WTDC Resolution 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) on Bridging the digital divide, WTDC Resolution 77 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on Broadband technology and applications for greater growth and development of telecommunication/information and communication services and broadband connectivity, and WTDC Resolution 89 (Kigali, 2022) on Digital transformation for sustainable development

Broadband Mapping (of its 193 Member States) activities make use of geospatial tools applied to telecom infrastructure, together with relevant data for identifying missing links. This allows the development of projects and case studies for planning national broadband infrastructure deployment in support to digital transformation across sectors (e.g., financial inclusion, education, health). ITU mapping tools feed into partnership activities such as in school connectivity, financial inclusion and the use of ICT Business Planning for sustainable network development.

- **CONNECTIVITY DATA AND STATISTICS:** Data is critical to our goal of connecting the world. It tells us where we were, where we are, what works and what does not. It is a key ingredient of empirical research for establishing correlation, determining causality, identifying good practices, and designing effective interventions. ITU leads the global ICTs statistics agenda. It collects, actively uses the data and statistics to monitor digital divide, and disseminates vital information and carries out world-class research to support evidence-based decision making towards universal and meaningful connectivity and sustained digital transformation: e.g., through ITU DataHub, ITU's annual Facts and figures and ICT price trends, and the Digital Development Dashboard.
- **SPECTRUM AND SATELLITE FOR CONNECTIVITY:** At the forthcoming Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23), ITU Member States will decide after a 4-year study cycle to update the Radio Regulations on agenda items, including but not limited to: i) the continued development of International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) systems, including the use of high-altitude platform stations as IMT base stations (HIBS), ii) the enhancement of aeronautical and maritime communications, including by satellite, for sub-orbital vehicles and for unmanned aircraft systems, iii) the modernization of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), iv) the improvement of the science services for the increasing importance and need for weather forecast and climate change monitoring and other scientific missions, iv) the development of the technical, operational and regulatory measures for the use of earth stations in motion on board aircrafts and ships for communication with geostationary and non-geostationary satellites, and v) the continued development of the regulation of recent constellations deployment, as well as improving the regulation of space planned bands and equitable access to satellite spectrum by new Member States.
- **ENABLING ENVIRONMENT (POLICY AND REGULATION):** As recognized by the regulatory community as best practice, an adaptive, resilient, evidence and outcome based, collaborative and fit-for-purpose policy and regulatory ecosystem is necessary for open and competitive digital markets to thrive along with delivering positive consumer outcomes and provide the foundation for Digital Transformation. The Best Practice Guidelines 'Regulatory uplift for financing digital infrastructure, access and use' adopted by regulators at the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) further amplify the importance of policy and regulatory thought leadership, cross-sectoral collaboration, building trust, engagement, and novel regulatory approaches the gold standard for digital regulation, to fast-forwarding digital connectivity for all, and bridge the funding and financing gap in digital markets.

Serving as a reference framework of good practices for digital policy and regulation, the G5 Benchmark and ICT Regulatory Tracker help countries to track progress, identify gaps in policy and regulatory frameworks and to establish roadmaps towards digital collaborative governance and inclusive digital transformation across all sectors of the economy.

- **DIGITAL SKILLS:** Digital skills are key to digital transformation and a significant enabler of each country's digitization. Instilling the necessary skills has become a key part of national digital transformation strategies. With a wide range of projects that target digital skills, ITU contributes

actively to the strengthening of digital capacities among its member states, e.g., via training for ICT professionals; basic and intermediate skills training for citizens and marginalized groups; a commitment to invest in skills development for young people; tools and guidelines to implement digital skills strategies; and international cooperation to help governments increase their digital capacity. Among others, the [ITU Digital Transformation Centres \(DTC\) Initiative](#), launched with Cisco in 2019, aims to strengthen people's digital capacities, particularly in underserved communities. Over 150 000 people (of which over 60% were female) have been trained in basic and intermediate digital skills through 13 DTCs located in Africa, the Americas, and the Arab and Asia-Pacific regions.

- **CYBERSECURITY AND EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS:** ITU is committed to promoting cybersecurity and ensuring the security of telecommunication/ICT networks and services. Its Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) provides a framework for measuring a country's commitment and helps improve cybersecurity. ITU's [National CIRT Programme](#) helps enhance countries' cybersecurity capabilities, and its [Cyberdrill](#) exercises provide hands-on training for cyber incident response teams. ITU is also helping countries develop their [National Cybersecurity Strategies and action plans](#) and promoting cybersecurity inclusion through initiatives such as [Child Online Protection \(COP\)](#) and [Women in Cyber](#). ITU provides capacity building support for developing countries and has established programs for women in cybersecurity. As an international standards-making body for ICTs, interoperability, accessibility and security are our requirements from the design stage. Over 200 standards focusing on security and a series of ICT standards (e.g., Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Information Technology for Networks, many more.) have been published by ITU.

As the world witnessed an increased number of natural hazards and climate-related disasters, ITU works with countries to better leverage ICTs in disaster risk reduction and management, such as developing [National Emergency Telecommunications plans](#), and promotes the adoption of the Tampere Convention to promote coordination across different stakeholders in the whole lifecycle of disasters. Moreover, as part of [the UN Early Warnings for All Initiative](#), ITU is leading the effort on warning dissemination and communication pillar, and highlight the use of mobile networks (e.g., cell-broadcast and/or location-based SMS in combination with Common Alerting Protocol to) in early warnings. In disaster response, [ITU Disaster Connectivity Maps](#) support government and first responders in identifying connectivity outages to facilitate faster and targeted connectivity restoration. Upon request from the country, [ITU deploys equipment](#) to support coordination of relief operations, with the support of the ITU Emergency Telecommunication Roster. ITU works closely with Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) and other partners in disaster response.

- **SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY, INCLUDING WORK ON GHG EMISSIONS AND E-WASTE:** While digital technologies are critical tools to respond to the most pressing global challenges of our time and a key for fast-tracking the achievement of the SDGs, responsible innovation and environmental and circular considerations must become integral in the design, deployment and decommissioning of digital technologies. ITU's unique membership and mandate make it an important player for driving green digital transformation. This includes its work on [green standards](#) and [e-waste data](#) and [policies](#), where it guides countries and provides technical assistance to support countries in establishing environmentally sound national e-waste management systems and regulation. ITU also tracks industry emissions, energy use and climate commitments from the world's largest technology companies and supports countries in monitoring and tracking ICT sector Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions and energy use (e.g., ITU's [Global E-waste Monitor](#) and the [Greening Digital Companies Report](#)).

- **CONVENING GLOBAL PLATFORMS FOR CONNECTIVITY:** Led by H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Carlos Slim Helù of Mexico, [the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development](#) is co-chaired by ITU's Secretary-General and UNESCO Director-General and comprises over 50 Commissioners who represent a cross-cutting group of top CEO and industry and policy leaders, with academia and organizations concerned with development. The Commission serves as a foundation for bringing the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation to life with its advocacy and thought leadership work and contributing and shaping the Global Digital Compact process (in particular in the pillar of "Connect all people to the internet, including all schools") and outcomes as the high-level advisory multistakeholder group.
- **[THE WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION/ICT POLICY FORUM \(WTPF\)](#)** is a high-level international forum to exchange views on the key policy issues arising from today's fast changing telecommunication/ICT environment. At the last meeting, held in Dec2021, the Forum approved a set of five non-binding policy guidance documents, known as 'Opinions', such as [on emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, affordable and security connectivity, digital literacy and skills, and more](#), helping shape future technology policy. ITU, together with UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, in collaboration with all WSIS Action Line (co-) facilitators and partners, is also convening [the annual WSIS Forum](#) as a global multistakeholder platform facilitating the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines. With the theme of WSIS Action Lines for 'Building Back Better and Accelerating the achievement of the SDGs', [the WSIS Forum 2023](#) was held from 13 – 17 March at the ITU HQs in Geneva, followed by virtual workshops scheduled in April and May.
- **[GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE \(EQUALS\)](#)** contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda through actions and evidence-based research aimed at closing the global gender digital divide. By promoting awareness, building political commitments, leveraging resources and knowledge, harnessing the capacities of partners, and supporting real action, EQUALS seeks to achieve digital gender equality. [Generation Connect](#) is a leading platform to engage, specifically with global youth and encourage their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change, empowering young people with the digital skills and opportunities to advance their vision of connected future. Its Call to Action '[My digital future](#)' facilitated by ITU serves as an advocacy instrument to enhance youth engagement in ITU and across the UN system and strengthen the youth perspective in organizational digital strategies and their implementation.
- **[THE AI FOR GOOD PLATFORM](#)**, organized by ITU, together with 40 partner UN agencies and co-convened by the government of Switzerland. The goal of AI for Good is to identify practical applications of AI to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and connect AI innovators with public and private-sector decision-makers to help scale up AI solutions globally. The landmark 2017 AI for Good Global Summit marked the beginning of a global dialogue on the potential of AI to act as a force for good. The action-oriented 2018 and 2019 summits gave rise to numerous AI for Good projects including several [ITU "pre-standardization" initiatives](#) investigating the standardization requirements for high-potential AI use cases. The upcoming [AI for Good Global Summit 2023](#) (6-7 July, Geneva) combines 3,000+ participants and online participation from the over 15,000+ members of the AI-powered community platform, the [AI for Good Neural Network](#), making it the world's most inclusive AI solutions and matchmaking event.

As part of AI for Good, ITU, in collaboration with over 40 UN agencies and bodies, issues an annual report that aims to present a comprehensive overview of the activities being carried out by the UN system. The 2022 edition is available [here](#).

- **AI IN STANDARDIZATION:** There are a number of pre-standardization initiatives, open to everyone, called ITU-T Focus Groups that work for the quick development of specifications to address industry needs as they emerge on various aspects of AI: including digital agriculture, disaster management, health, autonomous networks, and the metaverse. ITU-T Study Groups, that are open to all ITU members, also address aspects of AI and machine learning within their mandates. The work has so far resulted in [ITU-T Recommendations and Supplements](#) as well as deliverables from the various [ITU-T Focus Groups](#). There is also ongoing work within ITU-R on this topic.
- **[GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON AI AND DATA COMMONS](#):** The Global Initiative on AI and Data Commons is a program and collaborative platform to support the implementation of beneficial AI based solutions to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It is now initiating a public collaborative effort named "[Project Resilience](#)". The vision, in the continuity of efforts towards AI for the common good, is to create a public AI service where a global community of innovators and thought leaders can enhance and utilize a collection of data and AI approaches both in the context of the current pandemic and for similar future challenges. The goal is to collaboratively design and build an open AI system that could inform and help tackle global decision-augmentation problems.
- **AI/ML COMPETITIONS ("CHALLENGES"):** Through the Challenge, ITU encourages and supports the growing community driving the integration of AI/ML in networks and at the same time enhances the community driving standardization work for AI/ML, creating new opportunities for industry and academia to influence the evolution of ITU standards. The solutions can be accessed in several repositories on the [Challenge GitHub](#).
- **[UN HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES \(HLCP\) INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON AI \(IAWG-AI\)](#):** The IAWG-AI, established during the 40th HLCP session in October 2020, focuses on advancing policy and programmatic coherence of AI activities within the UN. It currently has 40 UN agencies and bodies as members, and several workstreams such as capacity development, procurement guidelines, education, justice, industry, foresight, and other areas.