

ITUWebinars

**Digital accessibility during
COVID-19 & recovery period:
An imperative to ensure inclusive
societies in the digital world**

*ITU-D Study Group 1 Question 7/1
"Access to telecommunication/ICT services
by persons with disabilities and other persons
with specific needs"*

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ITU Study Group 1 Question 7/1 Public Webinar on "Digital Accessibility during COVID-19 & Recovery period : An imperative to ensure inclusive societies in the digital world, held on 24 June 2020.

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>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: The floor is yours to begin.

>> IT MODERATOR : Good morning, dear participants. Welcome to the meeting. It is Gvantsa. I am the remote participation Moderator for this meeting. I want to call your attention to the following details. Firstly I would like to ask you to use the chat only for raising questions or making comments related to the topic. Also please keep yourself muted during the whole meeting to avoid any disturbance. Secondly, it is advisable to turn the video off and only have it on when speaking. Thirdly, the meeting will be recorded for report writing purposes. And the last point is that captioning is provided in Zoom and full page scrolling realtime captioning is available. So enable it there is a button, CC button below. You need to select show subtitles and you have access to it.

So that's all. I will stay at your disposal per chat for any other questions or technical issues. Thank you very much and have a nice meeting.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you very much. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, for me as well on behalf of the ITU-D question 7 management team I would like to greet you and thank you for participating in this web dialogue on digital accessibility during COVID-19 and the recovery period. It is my huge pleasure to inform you that we have 178 registered participants which is really great and thank you again all for registering and participating.

So the objective of today's web dialogue is to hold an open informative and interactive discussion with all interested stakeholders on the importance of ICT accessibility, global implementation and related impact of COVID-19 and the lives of all people, in particular for those with disabilities. Furthermore, we aim at raising awareness and encouraging engagement to prioritize ICT accessibility as a high priority to ensure that everyone's Right to Communicate and be part of the digital world is fulfilled. Allow me just to briefly say how we will run this web dialogue. First we will have the opening remarks by the BDT director, and then we will have our esteemed speakers and after that we will open the floor for discussions.

You can leave your questions in the chat box as well as comments and we will look at them and select we hope that there are going to be many questions. We will select some of them for our speakers to give the -- to give the answers to them. So now we -- before we proceed I would like to invite ITU-D director, Mrs. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, I would like to invite the speakers, ITU support and as many of us as possible for a group photo and then we proceed with the opening remarks.

So can we have the cameras on please? Okay. All right. Okay. IT support is going to take care of the group photo. But now without further ado it is my honor to introduce and to invite Mrs. Doreen Bogdan-Martin,

director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of ITU to deliver her opening remarks. Doreen, the floor is yours.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you so much and good afternoon good evening, good morning, everyone. I hope you are all well and in good health. I'm really pleased to be able to join you today to open -- to kick off these discussions on what has I would say become often an overlooked issue in the scramble to respond to the COVID crisis that continues to sweep through the world. We are all very much aware that the wave of lockdowns imposed by so many nations has really made access to digital connectivity an imperative for all. Hoping to maintain business continuity, to keep children learning, ensuring that people have online access to essential goods and services, and providing essential social support particularly for populations at risk.

The UN has already noted with some concern that the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing and qualities exposing the extent of exclusion and highlighting the need to accelerate work on disability inclusion. UN figures, UN estimates as you know that the number of people worldwide that are coping with some form of disability could be as high as one billion. And yet these people remain one of society's most marginalized groups having been among the hardest hit by the crisis in terms of fatalities and also in terms of long term damage to health. Even under normal circumstances Persons with Disabilities are less likely to be able to access health care, education and employment, less likely to participate in community and then more likely to live in poverty, experience higher rates of violence and suffer neglect and abuse. COVID-19 has further compounding this already grim picture by disproportionately impacting Persons with Disabilities both directly and also indirectly.

In a world that has never been so dependent on the power of digital technologies we must redouble and I stress we must redouble our efforts to make sure that all people regardless of their gender, their ability, their age, their location enjoy equal access to digital platforms and services. And that's why the work of this Study Group and this particular question is so important. In today's fragile world it is absolutely essential that digital information be distributed and available in formats that are accessible. That are accessible to all people and not just the able bodied. And neglecting this imperative will mean consigning many Persons with Disabilities to a higher risk of contamination and exclusion from essential health and safety information and services and vital social support programs.

Issues of digital accessibility impact all types of communications from websites, to web conferencing, applications to telephone, radio, TV, video streaming and social networks and online chat. The availability and public awareness of dedicated help lines that aim to ensure public health information is accessible, for example, relay services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, is just one example of an essential support service that will

help mitigate the spread and the impact of this pandemic. We also must remember that a great many Persons with Disabilities rely on things like regular home delivery of essential items for the well-being, medications, hygiene products and food and in lockdown situations it is vital that retailers and service providers ensure that accessibility principles are incorporated in to all online information services and platforms.

So ensure that Persons with Disabilities the elderly and others with special needs are protected supported and can access the goods and the services that they need.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the United Nations Secretary-General's policy on disability inclusion as well as related global commitments aimed at promoting digital inclusiveness without discrimination led the ITU's development sector to make available a set of practical ICT accessibility Guidelines that outline the principles and the actions that policymakers should consider to ensure that digital information services and products are accessible to all including Persons with Disabilities. So that no one is left behind in this global crisis and within that UN effort to leave no one behind ITU is committed and very much engaged in implementing the UN disability inclusion strategy, leading by example in a way that we approach our own work and I'm greatly encouraged to see that our message on digital inclusion on digital inclusiveness is already being heard and Acted upon in some regions with the Europe and Accessibility Act now making accessibility a public and private digital information services compulsory. I do hope in the future that we will see more and more moves in this direction so that digital technology is now pervasive, people-centered and really promotes the empowerment of all people without discrimination. I would encourage you in your discussion this afternoon, in your work today to remember that the adoption and the implementation of digital accessibility policies and strategies is a fundamental building block for full digital inclusion for every country, for every person for every region and with that I hand back over to you and I really wish you very fruitful discussions this afternoon. Thank you very much.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you very much, Doreen, for your encouraging inspiring words, extremely strong messages, on behalf of the members and I know that for sure because I communicate the members on the topic of ICT accessibility we are extremely grateful for the support ITU-D is providing under your leadership and we have no doubt that on the road of implementation of ICT accessibility towards the full digital inclusion the cooperation and your support to the members is going to be as successful as it has been so far. We will relying on ITU resources on the knowledge sharing on the expertise of your team and to you personally. Thank you very much for the amazing work that you have done in the post of the BDT director.

And now we move to our first speaker. So it is my pleasure to

introduce Ms. Daniela Bas, director of division for inclusive social development at United Nations Department of Economic and social affairs and unfortunately miss Bas could not be with us in person. But she has prepared a video message that is going to compliment the presentation that you are going to find extremely useful. So I would like to ask IT support to play the video and the presentation.

>> DANIELA BAS: Thank you. Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm so very glad to be with you virtually and being part of this extremely important dialogue that we are having today about the role of digital technologies and how they can improve life of everyone, particularly because of the pandemic we are facing but particularly of Persons with Disabilities. ICT really empowers Persons with Disabilities. And this is being recognized by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Accessible ICT is essential for Persons with Disabilities to live independently, participate in all aspects of life and access on an equal basis with others. Equal basis to the physical world and to transportation, communication and information. We see that technologies plays an important role in several aspects of life and in the case of Persons with Disabilities technology makes things possible. It affects how Persons with Disabilities can learn, work, interact. And it is an essential tool for societies in general, economies and the environment to be able to have -- the global crisis of COVID-19 has really affected tremendously more than one billion Persons with Disabilities. Their health, safety, dignity and independence and communities are severely challenged due to the lack of access to health care and social services, education and employment and, you know, the -- really needed to have -- make sure that any of those people who don't have access to ICTs receive the proper assistance, sign language and interpretation, psychosocial support if needed, and technical access to all areas of our lives as I said. It goes beyond a health pandemic. It is a test of humanity. It is a test about our human solidarity in addressing qualities and impact, individuals and societies and it puts a spotlight on the pre-existing inequalities for those who -- Persons with Disabilities and it exposes those with prevailing social economic models which the 2030 Agenda addresses. It is a wake-up call for all of us, ICT are life saving for Persons with Disabilities to stay connect and to update on new information. Medical, education, social, job opportunities. Without ICT those who already face -- are very accessible abled situations will find barriers to inclusion.

So measures to ensure physical distancing has imposed overall resilience on technology and communication. Persons with Disabilities with limited access to technology. We need as I said sign language interpretation, accessible websites. Text capabilities, and accessible electronic display screens in public spaces. So COVID-19 has brought front and center the need for digital accessibility and the urgency of addressing digital

transformation. Now let's look at examples of how digital accessibility enables and recognizes opportunities. We were thinking about learning opportunities in terms of remote and distance learning programs, you know, previously outbreaks have shown us the unprecedented negative affect due to school closure which provides a strong driver for all of us to support continued learning at all costs. Facilitate participation by all children, including some of the provision of assistive devices and reasonable accommodation, learning materials and instructions are accessible and adopted in multiple accessible formats to support remote learning of children and lifelong learning of adults being that they have sensory, physical, cognitive or learning disabilities.

So when it comes to employment, which is the other example I would like to bring to the conversation and the discussion today, in the sphere the COVID crisis situation has enabled working or doing business online from home and it has being mainstreamed. It is a business process by now and it offers those Persons with Disabilities more flexible and accessible options. So information and communication technologies are key to limit the negative impact of confinement for all, including Persons with Disabilities and their families and to build that together.

We have to make sure that whatever Persons with Disabilities are -- have adopted software or equipment, whatever they had in the working place, it has also to be further adjusted and providing for the new working environment. So to make sure that there are all equal in that sense, too. Therefore we can see that the new technologies in digital accessibility are really an important part to build that. We have seen amazing innovations, development of new technologies, including Artificial Intelligence based technologies and we have seen accessible features to end user devices that have increased the significantly. So the use of Artificial Intelligence based technologies to benefit groups with disabilities and abilities in general, remains scarce. We do -- universal designed and line dissemination of digital technologies can be the answer and it can be done in a cost effective manner and a win-win solution for technology developers and for users. It is marginal cost to plan and design the various stages of accessibility. It is about 1 to 3% of the overall cost. I think it is a very small investment, if you think it reaches more than 50% of the world population and in this case the Governments can lead by example by ensuring that products and services are available, affordable and accessible for Persons with Disabilities. And the accessibility parameters are speaking clearly from the design process and are monitored very closely so that this will allow to strengthen access to technologies.

Therefore, partnerships within Governments, the private sector, private technology companies software development entrepreneurs, Persons with Disabilities and their organizations are critical to drive meaningful change to new technologies.

And so does the leadership and effective public policies to prioritize this Human Rights based approach to digital transformation in alignment also with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

In conclusion, DESA and the division for inclusive social development are committed to supporting countries and other stakeholders in their efforts to include Persons with Disabilities in the COVID-19 response, recovery and build back better. We published an UN Flagship Report on disability and development in 2018 that identifies key actions to make ICT accessible for Persons with Disabilities as shown in the slide. So again we need to engage all stakeholders in the ICT sector and we need to support research and development initiatives with user approach. We need to select disaggregated data for the benchmark in terms of impact of COVID-19 response, recovery and build back better.

You know, COVID-19 has brought us anything positive, it is that this situation is a stark reminder for the need for more solidarity and togetherness. We need cooperation across borders and sectors and generations and the world. What is the way forward? It is the Sustainable Development Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda. There is the answer. It is through informational partnerships and cooperation. It is through multi-stakeholders engagement in promoting the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in response to COVID-19. Thank you. Have a successful meeting.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Well, I'm sure that you will agree that this was an extremely insightful presentation by Ms. Daniela Bas. And that she really reminded us that the primary goal of the digital inclusion is the full implementation of the Convention and in particular the provisions related to ICT accessibility. However in that process we should really make sure that we ensure that Persons with Disabilities are included in all decision making processes, monitoring and development of the standards. And as one of the pillars of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development members absolutely must work towards the implementation of the Conventions because that is only way to leave no one behind.

And now we move on to our next speaker and it is my great pleasure to have with us Immaculada Placencia-Porrero, senior expert for disability and inclusion at DG employment social affairs and inclusion at the European Commission. Before I give the floor to Ima I would like to just for those of you who are not familiar to say that at the EU level a significant break through has been made by adopting several pieces of specific accessibility legislation as tools for the implementation of the Convention. So Ima we look forward to your presentation.

>> IMMACULADA PLACENCIA-PORRERO: Hello everybody. I am happy and thankful for the invitation to be able to present what we are doing at the European Union on accessibility in relation to ICT in this difficult situation of COVID. I have to say that the speech of Daniela Bas really

contains, contained quite a lot of philosophy and thoughts that I was going to share with you. And so please see that how my message is reinforcing some of those messages.

I think we all agree that this has been an unprecedented situation and an unprecedented situation that has impacted people in an unexpected way and it has a major impact on Persons with Disabilities and I would like also to refer to older persons, because mostly those older persons that have disabilities and those are a big priority of them has also been significantly impacted. Both from a social point of view, and support they need and but also by the higher risks of infections also being more vulnerable as in the impact that the illness itself had.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Sorry to interrupt. We have a comment in chat box Christopher is saying that captions is partly covering your mouth. So making lip reading impossible. If you can move up your camera. Okay.

>> IMMACULADA PLACENCIA-PORRERO: Is that better?

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Okay. All right.

>> IMMACULADA PLACENCIA-PORRERO: So I continue saying that the -- in relation to the illness we have to talk about other elements of this pandemic in relation to confinement and isolation. It has led to exponential use of technology in all aspects of your lives. Communicating with friends and families, shopping, contacting health and social service, entertainment, Daniela also mentioned already teleworking but also schooling. While technology really has provided a great opportunity for general population to cope with COVID, for those persons that could not use technology it led to additional isolation and exclusion.

The main impact, the main visible reason for this is being insufficient accessibility. Making it very difficult, not to say impossible, the use of many technological solutions. Even when communicating information about protective equipment and health measures that an individual have to take about washing your hands or what type of masks to use what are the symptoms of the illness without being done in accessible formats would not reach those struggling with their health, with their health today and those Persons with Disabilities struggling with their health. So we need to make sure that those messages reach Persons with Disabilities and reach older persons. And let me share with you a couple of examples of measures that we have taken at the commission. The first thing is that we have established a close dialogue with representative organizations of Persons with Disabilities as well as service providers of -- for Persons with Disabilities. Their inputs have been very valuable in understanding what challenges we were confronted with and what measures needed taken. In addition the commission website where documents and messages about COVID are published is made accessible and those documents themselves. The commission has made really great efforts to facilitate the first -- the response to COVID by facilitating funding both electronic but also guarantees

and other types of financial instruments to be able to buy equipment, to be able to buy masks and to support health officials and so forth. Currently the efforts are being put in the financial recovery and they are also a huge financial effort is put on the table.

Well, I was telling the message that the commission has been taking. In addition our video messages are made more accessible with subtitles and sign language interpretation and this has gone up to our highest level. The commissioner responsible for the quality is really in her messages addressing this and using accessibility is accessible communication. And the aim is to have communication accessible and to add subtitles or video sign language video at a later stage. By the way, let me say that this is not only an objective but it is a legal obligations for all the European Union institutions. In addition the commission has start -- has a constant dialogue with the Member States where the messages on accessibility has been passed. And, for example, also legal documents, for example, the commission issued a legal Act recommendation on Mobile Applications for COVID, for monitoring the situation of COVID. And there accessibility for Persons with Disabilities was clearly included as an element of those applications.

Let me devote a few words to the schools because confinement measures resulting from the outbreak of COVID has put enormous pressures on school communities across the EU and in particular on learners with disabilities but also on the families. Families that were already under a lot of pressure teleworking from home and having to take care of the kids and constrained environments have now also to take additional measures to make books accessible information and to try to solve at the lack of accessibility in remote schooling tools.

Learners with disabilities then have encountered various negatively in -- impacting their learning developments. So not only is an instant negative impact that you will not be able to use this technologies but also it has an impact later on for the process of development process of students with disabilities.

Remote education has to be inclusive and this means that it must be accessible for all learners with disabilities. They are also -- we need to see the assistance being accessible and we are confronted with issues like sign language interpretation, remote sign language interpretation, live captioning and other measures that need also to be developed in consultation with learners with disabilities and their family. The commission is putting as said -- has put the last years policies forward, legislation, standards to ensure that ICT is accessible for Persons with Disabilities. For example, we have got already in to force public procurement legislation that requires to buy accessible. So when public authorities buy video conferencing systems or schools remote schools or books, this have to be bought accessible. Legislation is very clear. When the funds that we have made more flexible

for targeting -- to take targeting measures in relation to COVID when the European funds are in use, they also need to respect accessibility.

I would like to say that as a personal reflection given the work that I have been doing on the Accessibility Act, that the Accessibility Act in this situation has reaffirmed its pertinence, urgency, its need, and we are talking about accessibility of computers, telephones, online banking, e-commerce. People with disabilities were not always able to do their shopping when living alone due to lack of accessibility of e-commerce or supermarkets website. E-books just to mention some of those.

Also I would like but I would like to finish with a positive measures, message saying that I'm sure that Member States are working hard to implement the Act, that the economic operators the private sector is also working hard in order to comply with obligations under the European Accessibility Act. And even for basic things, like health care services or being able to call emergency services when at home noticing the symptoms of COVID is a challenge for some, for some persons. If -- I just want to finish by saying yes, that our resources, our legislation, our accessibility requirements, our standards are on ICT accessibility are available for anybody that wants to use them. And is willing to know even before the deadlines that legislation marks, it is willing to make products and services ICT, products and services accessible for Persons with Disabilities. We are now fib -- we are now starting the preparation of a new disability strategy. The current one is finishing this year in 2020 and the lessons learned from COVID will be really taken on board. So thank you very much for your attention.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you Ima. It is not only from the perspective of your full-time job so to speak and the European Commission and also you personally really is very firm advocate for the reaching the maximum when it comes to implementation of ICT accessibility. What is important for us to know that there are good practices available at the EU, be it the legislation, be it all the other aspects, education, implementation in all the other areas. And it is important to know that and to make the most of them, to replicate them, especially in the developing country because some of our participants who are coming from Europe they know when it comes to ICT accessibility Europe region is particularly diverse because in one -- in part of Europe there is an extremely high level of the accessible ICTs while on the other part in Developing Countries it is on the extremely low level. So we will keep on looking for the good practices and try to implement as much as possible in to the legal frameworks and in everyday life. Thank you very much Ima for your very insightful words. Now it is my huge pleasure to introduce our next speaker, and it is Ms. Lidia Best. Lidia is vice-president of the European federation of hard-of-hearing which is also the Vice-Chairperson of the ITU joint coordination activity on accessibility and human factors group. For those of you who are not very much familiar

with this particular group it is an extremely important group at the level of ITU connecting the sector of ITU and it is Chaired by one of our Vice Rapporteurs of question 7 Ms. Andrea Saks. Now Lidia the floor is yours.

>> LIDIA BEST: Thank you very much for inviting me to this important dialogue. And to take part, and to provide some insights on the impact of COVID-19 on persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. I would like to make a tiny bit correction and in vice-president of European federation, I just stepped down last month. And I'm also a Chair of Deafened People. May I ask for a slide showing. Thank you.

Thank you. So impact of -- next slide, please. Thank you. Impact of COVID-19 on persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing has been probably not often noticed. And for this reason I decided to show a little bit of concept of -- to try to understand how many of us actually are being affected. The previous speaker Ms. Daniela Bas has been mentioning the numbers. And what has happened is over 5% of the world's population, which is 466 million people who have disabling hearing loss, what does that mean? It means for that that particular group they need hearing aids or even cochlear implants to enable them to function and to hear well. There is more of us, there is a bigger number of people with marginal hearing loss which are also affected and might not be exactly part of those figures. In approximately one-third of people over 65 years of age are affected by this disabling hearing loss and the main impact is ability to communicate with others.

And these figures are from the World Health Organization. We also know that people over the age of 70 especially during COVID lockdown pandemic have been told to shield because they were at greater risk. But many of them live alone which is providing additional impact on their isolation during the time. So what has been happening? We had general practitioners first point of contact, health services, moving to telephone consultation due to the social distancing, training education and employment also moved to online platforms. Local authority rapid response team mostly have moved to front line systems. It was the easiest thing to set up for them. Televised COVID briefings and that was not easy and that's in general world wide. Hearing care services have stopped. They were not the most important services to continue at the time when health services have been especially overwhelmed with COVID-19 response. Next slide. For example, I'm just showing the UK itself what has been happening but not only. In general practitioners mentioned moved to appointments and consultations of reform. We need -- we need to ask questions, how accessible was those phone calls are, how easily for persons with hearing loss is to actually take part in post consultation, let alone sound. Hearing care services including cochlear implant services have stopped and only dealing with emergencies. If you cannot hear, how do you communicate? Many people have been waiting for the operations or already had the

operation but waiting for cochlear implant process to be activated to enable them to hear and start the habilitation process. That has stopped. So, for example, in UK we have relay UK which is a text relay service telephone service enabling users to make calls and if you have a laptop, tablet or Smartphone you can do that. But many other people do not have it which can be as well a barrier. Additionally our system is not optimized for receiving incoming calls. So can we answer questions, are persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing in Europe and elsewhere able to use the telephone in safe unrestricted manner as hearing people? No, they cannot. With a few restrictions worldwide, especially the United States having the best offering if I could say for everybody, range of services for people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafened, sign language users, a range of services to enable them to communicate. Next slide, please.

COVID-19 has exposed communication gaps. There is no denying of this. And previous speakers also have mentioned this. So it is also a nice -- myself are a cochlear implant users. Persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, hearing aids, cochlear implants alone, hearing loss and how it is affecting individual is personal. So when one person might be doing quite well speaking over the phone with family and friends may not do so well with strangers and that's quite difficult for some people to understand. That's how we actually are being affected. Technology already existed to deploy accessible telehealth, by using video calls and conferencing tools and if a person does not have technology in the home we can use SMS. So help Governments and service providers implement framework for functional equivalent to telephone for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and also for persons who using sign language, ITU-T has developed a recommendation F.930, multimedia telecommunication relay services. I urge all Government services to look in to it and to start working using this standard. Thank you. Next slide.

Now we are coming to an interesting part which is access to information, the most popular would be the COVID briefings we have all had in our different respective countries. What I have done over the past few months I have looked through social media, looked through all different organizations working on behalf of Persons with Disabilities and I have been struck by while yes, we have some legislations in place, we have some things maybe in place, access was not there. So, for example, most countries including developed ones even European ones were not fully prepared to make sure that everyone has digital access to televised information, sign language and captioning. It shouldn't be happening but it has. In some countries are still provided with unreliable captioning. If you can't read it clearly it is much harder to access the information. Sign language interpreter is not something that sign language users can use. And can understand what's being said. And at the same time sometimes none of these above were shown. Show also UK example when we had our

briefings which is a good example of accessibility. But there are also problems and the sign language users have taken Government to court because some of the sign language interpretation was not followed up by questions and answer session and the sign language users want to make sure we can access sign language interpretation across all platforms.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Sorry, we just need to keep an eye on timing. Just to bring it to your attention. Go on.

>> LIDIA BEST: Sorry. So quick lack of captions has been an issue. Next slide, please. Work and education is now online as we all know. So what we have found and what has been happening is what work meeting online have not always been using the professional captioners like we are using today. In light of awareness of online platform accessibility features left many people struggling to participate and organizers don't know what we need to provide and this is a problem. Next slide, please. And this is where I would like to conclude. So thank you very much for keeping the time -- eye on the timing. Persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing and especially older people have become more isolated and during COVID 19 and lack of accessible information created a real risk to managing the pandemic and the risk to people's health and well-being. Most of the countries that have been mentioned have not been prepared and what COVID has exposed is the communication gaps in infrastructure local Government services of the health, health services, telecom relay services. And also the exposed lack of development and willful use of realtime captioning in other languages. Without appropriate accessible futures and services vital services cannot be seen by all. And I think it is essential that policymakers understand what ICT accessibility which is particularly focused on Persons with Disabilities actually comes to everyone. Everyone is using the accessibility features. And it is something worth quite a lot of time everyone mentions this. It helps refugees in the country with languages of other countries, older person, anybody with specific circumstances. In the world of Anthony Guterres, United Nations secretary to achieve more inclusive and accessible societies, we need Governments to place people with disabilities at the center of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and to consult and engage with people with disabilities. So basically Nothing About Us, Without Us. Thank you very much for your time.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you Lidia. Rest assured that your presentation that you delivered in your capacity of Chair of Deafened People of the UK is going to be very much reflected in the final report of question 7 in the section dedicated because to the impact of COVID because you have just shared so many useful messages and resources that would be of use for future to the members.

Now we have officially ten minutes before we end. So I am going to invite our last but not least speaker Mr. Axel Leblois who is the President and executive director of the global initiative for inclusive ICTs, G3ict. Hello

Axel. I will not make a sort of lengthy introduction. I would say that it is outst why have heard the accessibility of ICTs has gained signature momentum around the world but the actual progress in implementing in the implementation of ICTs is however still limited. What is the way forward?

>> AXEL LEBLOIS: Thank you very much. Welcome everyone. I need to share a presentation that's going to be short. Hopefully you can see it. Bear with me one second, I will launch. You will see my speech.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Yes. Yes, I can see it. I'm sure that the participants can see it, too.

>> AXEL LEBLOIS: So what I would like to focus on today is the digital accessibility is possible to make it happen and it should be done. So I will focus exclusively on very practical ways for ITU Member States and all of our stakeholders to global track.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Sorry to interrupt again, I have got instruction that still for the sake of captioning your head, I didn't see the comment, the full comment, but move your head up. That's it. Okay. Or camera. That's better.

>> AXEL LEBLOIS: Thank you. We just heard from speakers that COVID-19 is in fact, a catalyst for action. And as we saw captioned digital accessibility is a big part of visible and acceptable for all stakeholders.

And yet as we purely know there are digital accessibility solutions for virtually every single digital platform today or application. There are solutions for accessibility. So why are they not implemented more thoroughly and what can be done among ITU Member States is the question we answer this morning. We do a complete survey of -- who modified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This year the 2020, we measure commitments and capacities throughout the outcome and most of the response, Persons with Disabilities. So where are we today around the world in terms of commitment? It is not actually discouraging. It is a known positive side. We see that first of all, persons in the countries have actually a general rule, to support user. And amazingly enough this recommendation which is real and unknown concept for most countries back in 2006 is now in area of 68% of persons of countries. The discussion this morning, the person in countries that have included access to accessibility, definition of accessibility, 49% and 59%. So it shows that what ITU does, UNDESA does is having an affect because many more countries are taking steps to migration. However, when you look at implementation the sector you see that only some countries that are -- are actually implementing digital accessibility, for instance. In green the top, countries that are doing something. Television for historic reasons has been ahead of other media with 61% of countries having some form of implementation going on. 54% for web. 51% for ICTs in education and so on and so forth. So it means that virtually half of the countries are doing nothing today in terms of implementation in any of those sectors. But the good news is that there is

progress and the progress is going on, regularly, every year since ten years we have done this survey. However, when you look at the details and that will be what Lidia Best was saying, the level of implementation is ridiculously low. If you look at television, yes, there are 61% of countries with policy, but 7% no implementation and 26% have a minimum level of implementation. So for television which is the best case, we have a situation where we have only 28% of countries with some sort of implementation. That means that people -- doesn't implement accessibility correctly. And -- of ICT accessibility.

So this is a real wake-up call because lots of curriculums but very detail in terms of actual outcome for Persons with Disabilities. Again there is progress. So this is happening. We are focusing on four areas of capacity to implement and significant gaps. Globally only 39% of countries have any kind of Government entity that specializes in ICT to accessibility. That in itself is a huge issue because there is no (inaudible) to have implementation throughout the D sector and Civil Society.

The single point which is extremely important which Lidia emphasized in her conclusion, is that only 26% of countries involve Persons with Disabilities in policy making on ICT accessibility. Or doing policy. That a major major gap. We have not -- migration and access. Most countries are the most success involve Persons with Disabilities in the decision-making process.

Standard development organizations, the adoption of standards is still done by a minority of countries and it is progressing but it is still impossible for a country to have ICT accessibility if you look at how it started out. This a very key point that is impossible to have web accessibility. And finally there is limited educational responses to Persons with Disabilities, only 38% of countries have any kind of force at University level or professional education services to ICT accessibility. So in conclusion, the key success factors we see for the post COVID-19era for digital accessibility, No. 1 define processes to involve Persons with Disabilities in development, promotion and monitoring of digital accessibility policies and programs. We know for a fact that this works. How can we possibly design systems understand situations and adapt to your cooperation without inserting Persons with Disabilities. Basic step to be taken.

It has a huge positive impact. The second one is adopting standards for accessibility and the third one is promoting understanding of disability and training and certification of accessibility professionals. We are a professionals with 20,000 members and this activity is going fast. And certification of professionals brings a lot of benefit to organization. Advise and guide organizations in the right direction. So people understand digital accessibility and everything about organization, private sector is also a must if you want to make progress. So with that I want to thank you for your attention. And we all said a very critical time and, you know, we think that the COVID-19 is an opportunity to promote digital accessibility further and

standard. Thank you.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you very much Axel. As you always provide excellent data and you share with us. We find it useful and I would like to encourage everyone to use it there. That is public. Now it is already 2 o'clock. But I hope you don't mind that we go beyond the set schedule. So I would like to -- I had received in my chat box a request for a short intervention by Dr. Pierre Horna, Secretary-General of United Nations conference trade and development. One minute you requested to present a project on e-Health. Yes, please do go ahead.

>> PIERRE HORNA: Thank you very much. Not I am the Secretary-General. I am at legal affairs officer.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: I am somehow giving you all these titles. Take away from Lidia and promoting you.

>> PIERRE HORNA: Thank you very much for the great opportunity to share with the colleagues from different Geneva based organizations and elsewhere from this particular area of access to digital platforms, in particular because the service on competition and consumer policies it is currently involved in an UN development account project organized by UNDESA which is called strengthening social protection from pandemic responses identifying the vulnerable aiding recovery and building resilience which is an UN wide project led by the Economic Commission from Africa coordinated by different streams. The one being the social protection streams by our colleagues from SCOLA in Beirut and within this particular social protection stream UNCTAD in Association with WHO AFRO office as well we are reporting, we are presenting or preparing a report on the strengthening Consumer Protection in the provision of health service including e-Health in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having regarded the extremely insightful presentations of our colleagues from different panelists I would say that this project that we are currently implementing with WHO it is very timely because it is also focusing on vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens include those with disabilities and, of course, the work that we are currently doing will provide the basis for future synergies and projects with other international organizations. We hope that with ITU we can join forces in this particular project and I kindly invite the colleagues involved in this particular work to contact us for the implementation of this project. Thank you very much.

>> AMELA ODOBASIC: Thank you for your intervention and please do inform us when you become promoted in to the Secretary-General. We will know about it. Okay. Now I got a message from BDT focal point that we do not have particular questions. And really due to time considering that we already passed the time schedule for this web dialogue, now allow me to wrap up and to just conclude this web dialogue in a few closing remarks.

The rest of the discussion I encourage you to continue on this particular

topic, I encourage you to continue within the question 7 as a platform for the exchange of views, experiences, good practices, et cetera. So join us for question 7 to discuss more about these good challenges as well as good opportunities. So now when it comes to closing remarks I would like to stress out as we have heard and seen there is no doubt that COVID-19 made evidence there is a need to intensify all activities related to digital or ICT accessibility to ensure the digital inclusion for all including those with disabilities.

Furthermore, ICT accessibility has reason as an imperative to guarantee inclusive societies in the digital world. ICT accessibility should be mainstreamed through the policies regulations, and other strategies to ensure the implementation and this includes as we have seen this should include education, employment, health. So -- and also just remind that all these topics are within the scope of the question 7.1. Very importantly the implementation of ICT accessibility policies and strategies should be considered among top priorities and part of the global policymakers agenda. This is crucial because without them we cannot make a significant further steps.

It is crucial to accelerate the implementation of ITU target 2.9 which calls for all Member States to ensure that ICTs are accessibility in all countries by 2023. So considering that we are now in 2020 we should really don't have much time. So should join forces and work together towards that goal. As we have seen today judging by the number of the participants there was interest for this topic but to achieve this goal, multi-stakeholder engagement in ensuring that information products and services are accessible for all people regardless of their gender, age, financial means or ability it is absolutely crucial. It is necessary to raise awareness to incentivize all the public and private sector as well as industry, manufacturers to develop and deliver accessible ICTs. And unless we move on unless we accelerate and unless we join in forces the digital gap will increase unless accessibility of ICTs is considered from the design stage.

So now before we close down, allow me to thank the ITU-D director Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin for her wholehearted dedication to the topic of digital inclusion that in the best interest of ITU members. I would like to thank the distinguished speakers for their outstanding presentations. I would love to thank Ms. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, senior coordinator within the digital inclusion and ITU-D and focal point on ICT accessibility on question 7.4 and 7.1 and I would love to thank the Study Group and Secretariat for the organization and support. Without them this would not be possible. And last but not least special thanks goes to you participants. You are welcome to join question 7 as a global platform for sharing knowledge and good practices in ICT accessibility. So come to the meetings. There is a lot of resources. We usually have excellent discussions. And because only together we can make a difference when it

comes to ICT accessibility and with this I would love to close this web dialogue. The presentations will be available on the Web page if I am -- if I am not correct, maybe Roxana or somebody from the Secretariat can give us further instruction to find the powerpoint presentations before we close. There was some requests by some of the participants asking where they can find the presentations. This web dialogue has been designed not only to reflect on impact of COVID and ICT accessibility but also to add value to the final report that question 7 is developing towards the WTDC. So Roxana can we have some final instructions of where to find the presentations.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: Thank you thank you very much for all the your dedication and support to make this web dialogue a success. Yes, everything will be made available of the so my colleague already indicated some links. We will also make available with the speakers' permission their presentation. Of course, they -- the messages are meant to be distributed world wide. Please consider always to indicate the source. And with this in mind for my colleagues would also like to try again to have a picture of all of you. I invite you if possible to all of you to put your videos on and in this way to enable my colleagues from Study Group and from ITU support to have you all in the picture. So if possible for you and -- yes, thank you very much. So let's try to have all of us in this picture. And with this we thank you very much for your collaboration and for your support to make a world accessible for all.

I will just wait for my colleagues to say if everything is okay for the photo. Rosheen, can you please confirm or the colleagues from the IT.

>> ROSHEEN AWOTAR-MAUREE: Yeah. Sorry I'm not in the picture myself. But thank you everyone for joining today. And smile please because the photo is being taken now.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: Thank you.

>> ROSHEEN AWOTAR-MAUREE: Keep the smile on because it has some glitches but we will get there. Big thanks to all of you for joining and please connect to us as Amela said and as Roxana said. We have got more webinars coming up on other topics. If you want to join ITU Study Groups to make a difference, ICT accessibility is waiting for you. The photo is done.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: Thank you very much. Thank you to all of you. Bye.

>> ROSHEEN AWOTAR-MAUREE: Bye-bye.

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