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| **Council Working Group on WSIS&SDG 34th meeting – Geneva, 25 September 2019** |  |
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|  | **Document CWG-WSIS&SDG-34/016-E** |
| **20 August 2019** |
| **English only** |

**Outcomes of the ITU activities towards High Level Political Forum 2019**

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| **Background:** The High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) is the central UN platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, which came into effect on January 1st.  The 2019 HLPF convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was held from 9 - 19 July, with "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" as its central theme; the in depth review of goals Goal 4 (education and lifelong learning), Goal 8 (sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), Goal 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries), Goal 13 (action to combat climate change), Goal 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies) and Goal 17 (Partnerships and Means of Implementation); as well as the presentation of 47 national voluntary reviews.  The 2019 HLPF ends the first four-year cycle of in-depth reviews of all 17 SDGs. |

**Key ITU inputs to HLPF 2019:**

* [ITU Council Input](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=1932&menu=3170)
* [Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development input](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=1935&menu=3170)
* [United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) input](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=1953&menu=3170)
* [World Summit on the Information Society Forum Outcomes](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=2102&menu=3170)

ITU also contributed to the following key input reports:

* [UN Secretary Generals Progress Report](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/134/95/PDF/N1913495.pdf)
* [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/)
* [STI Forum and its Report](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/231772019_Forum_summary_advanced_unedited_version.pdf)
* [2019 Financing for Sustainable Development Report](https://undocs.org/E/FFDF/2019/2)

**Key ITU activities during HLPF 2019**

ITU organized special and side events:

* Special event organized by ITU/UNITAR in collaboration with ILO, UNESCO and the Permanent Mission of Mexico: [Attaining the SDGs in a future that is digital: the role of capacity building, education and skills development for digital inclusion](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/1-UNHLPFfinalprogramme_ITU.pdf)
* Side event organized by ITU in collaboration with GeSI and the participation of Costa Rica, UNIDO, Microsoft and the Earth Institute: [Harnessing Frontier Technologies for Accelerating Climate Actions and the SDGs](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/2-HLPFSideEvent.pdf)
* Side event organized by ITU-UNDP/UNGIS and Saudi Arabia: [Fostering digital transformation and global partnerships for SDG achievement” - [Aligning WSIS process with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development]](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/3-05072019_SideEventatHLPF2019NewYork.DOCX)
* Technical Meeting UNGIS organized by ITU and reception sponsored by UNDP
* Side event organized by ITU in collaboration with Montenegro, DIAL, GeSI, and the participation of representatives of Burkina Faso, Bangladesh and Chile: [Scaling Digital Transformation to Achieve the SDGs Using a Whole-of-Government Approach (ITU, Montenegro, DIAL, GeSI)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/4-HLPF2019-SideEventConceptNoterev5.pdf)

Events organized by other entities with ITU participation:

* Special event organized by UNITAR with ITU Deputy Secretary General as panellist: [Launch of UN SDG: Learn: One Platform, One Partnership and One Programme for an effective, coherent and inclusive approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) learning”](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/5-ConceptnoteandProgrammeOpeningoftheSDGLearningCentreandlaunchofUNSDGLearn_updatedon07.07.2019(002).pdf)
* Luncheon event organized by the UN Secretary General’s Task Force on Digital Financing of the SDGs, Canada and Malawi, with participation of ITU’s Deputy Secretary-General: [Investing in the future – UNSG’s Task Force on Digital Financing of the SDGs - Canada/Malawi](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/6-MalcolmJohnson.pdf)
* Side event organized by UN Technology Bank, moderated by ITU Chief of SPM: [SDG17/UN Technology Bank for LDCs: ICTs and inclusiveness (ORHLLS, Turkey)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/7-TechnologyBank-SideEventFlyer1.pdf)
* Side event organized by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), in collaboration with ITU’s Chief of SPM as a panellist: [World Day against Trafficking in Persons: Use of ICTs to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Leaving No One Behind](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/8-ConceptNoteandAgenda-WDagainstTraffickinginPersons.pdf)
* Side event organized by WEF, IEEE and DQ with ITU BDT Director as panellist: [A Framework for Digital Literacy, Skills and Readiness](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/9-UNHLPFSEAFrameworkforDigitalLiteracySkillsandReadiness.docx)
* Official Programme session [High-level Segment of ECOSOC Thematic discussion “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality - Long term trends and scenarios](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/10-ECOSOC_HLS_concept_note.pdf), with ITU BDT Director as Lead Discussant

Statements:

* ITU [SG’s statement](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/11-ITU_Statement_HLPF_2019.pdf) delivered during the General Debate of the Ministerial segment and the High-level segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
* [Statement](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/12-ITUSTATEMENTHLPF-STIForumrev2.docx) delivered by Chief of SPM to the Thematic review/ Report of the STI Forum
* ITU commented on discussion on SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth

**Outcome documents and the SDG Summit**

The HLPF adopted a [procedural report](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/13-E_HLPF_2019_1_E.pdf) introduced by ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King.

This year, the HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC did not adopt a Ministerial Declaration, given that an HLPF, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, has been convened to take place on 24-25 September 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The “SDG Summit” will continue to assess progress achieved so far since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 and will provide leadership and guidance on the way forward that would help accelerate implementation of SDGs, by means of a political declaration, which has been negotiated and already been agreed (available [here](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/HLPF19/14-Zero-draft-Political-Declaration-HLPF-17.5.19_.pdf)).

**Key ICT related references:**

Many speakers during the various sessions of the formal programme made references to the digital transformation and its implications for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Among the references, these include: the lack of data and baselines for monitoring and reporting; investing in science, technology and innovation (STI), particularly of women to increase their participation in the digital economy; fostering innovation for small- and medium-sized enterprises; a call for faster, better, and cheaper technologies; for policies to enhance connectivity; providing mobile phone access as a primary step towards digital integration; providing policy recommendations focused on increasing digital skills and life-long learning to ensure an agile and easily adaptable workforce for a dynamic labour market; lack of numeracy and technical skills needed to benefit from the internet; the need to digitally connect schools around the world; provide financial and digital services for the unbanked; the increase use of digital platforms for more inclusive and transparent governance; and policies that are consistent with tackling climate change, including adoption of smart cities; among others.

New and emerging risks from the digital revolution and emerging technologies were also discussed, such as, robotics, artificial intelligence and demographics. These can either enormously advance or drastically threaten the 2030 Agenda, as they have the potential to drive economic growth, but also to exacerbate inequalities and exclusion. In this regard, there was a call for greater international cooperation in the areas of digital, cyber, and artificial intelligence technologies.

Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations summarized by highlighting that rapid technological change is a game changer. That frontier technologies offer best hope for achieving the SDGs, but they cannot be taken for granted. They are a double edge sword and we need to get them on the right direction to deliver for good. We need to prioritize a set of technologies and bridge the technology divide.

Similarly, it is important to note that the available [47 Voluntary National Reviews](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019/#vnrs) (VNRs) reports make some type of disclosure about technology, innovation and data in general, but also on ICT, connectivity and the digital transformation in particular. Among the many critical areas, these include health care, education, agriculture, governance, energy, the environment, climate change, smart and sustainable cities, early warning systems, e-waste, empowerment of women, youth and people with disabilities; digital financial inclusion, SMEs and entrepreneurship, and connecting the rural communities. This year, many VNRs also reference blockchain, AI, fintech, IoT, big data and raise complex questions about trust and privacy and pose a number of challenges, including the future of work, child online protection and digital sexual violence. All in all, many called for the need to invest in key areas such as ICT and digital infrastructure, digital literacy, affordability, digital safety, and cybersecurity.

**HLPF – SDG Summit**

The “Compilation Report of ITU Council contributions to the High-Level Political Forums (HLPF) 2016-2019” was transmitted to the President of the General Assembly by letter dated 19 July 2019. This report was requested to serve as ITU’s input to the SDG Summit to take place on 24-25 September 2019 (available [here](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/19/cwgwsis34/c/S19-CWGWSIS34-C-0015!!PDF-E.pdf)).