|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21Second meeting - Geneva, 10-11 February 2020** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document IEG-WTPF-21-2/10-E** |
|  | **23 December 2019** |
|  | **English only** |
| **Contribution submitted by the United States of America** |
| possible DRAFT OPINIONS for wtpf-21 |

[**Opinion [X]**](#OP1) **– Fostering digital skills, education and inclusion**

[**Opinion [X]**](#OP2) **on mobilizing an enabling policy environment to foster the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development**

[**Opinion [X]**](#OP3) **– Mobilizing new solutions for connectivity**

**\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \***

**OPINION [X] – Fostering digital skills, education and inclusion**

The Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

1. Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), Telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;
2. Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai 2018) Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology;
3. Resolution 205 (Dubai, 2018), ITU’s role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society;
4. Resolution 40 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017), Group on capacity building initiatives,
5. the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Outcome Documents;
6. Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), the ITU Strategic Plan 2020-2023, Goal 1 Growth, to enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital economy and society,

*considering*

1. that the effective “*Policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development,*” depend on thorough understanding of issues such as access and inclusion, digital literacy, training and skills development;
2. that the use of telecommunications/ICTs and digital technologies can raise productivity and improve overall welfare and creates opportunities and benefits for the economy, including the digital economy, but that such benefits will only be realized and broadly shared by improving internet access and basic digital literacy and skills;
3. that to capitalize on the benefits of digital telecommunications/ICT technologies and keep pace with technology advances, new skills for the digital economy are necessary;
4. that the development and improvement of human capacity building and a robust, predictable, enabling regulatory environment will ensure that technological development is sustainable;
5. the Buenos Aires Declaration and the Buenos Aires Action Plan adopted at the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), and in particular Objective 3 related to fostering an enabling environment conducive to sustainable telecommunications/ICT development and the implementation of programs on capacity building and human skills development to ITU membership;
6. that ITU’s “Measuring digital development Facts and Figures 2019” identifies lack of ICT skills as a key barrier to the uptake and effective use of the Internet;[[1]](#footnote-1)
7. that since 1992 the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector has been supporting countries in their efforts to use telecommunications/ICTs as a catalyst for development, including provision for assistance with capacity building;
8. that the ITU Academy offers courses and capacity development, and brings together under one umbrella a wide range of training activities and knowledge resources in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital development,

*noting*

that an inclusive digital society is one where all people regardless of their gender, age, ability, or location, have an equal opportunity to become empowered through ICTs, and that such empowerment and full participation in a digital society is only possible with digital literacy and skills,

*is of the view*

1. that Member States, Sector Members and other interested stakeholders should undertake efforts to improve education, training and skills necessary for participating effectively in the digital economy;
2. that education, digital literacy, training and skills development foster digital empowerment and inclusion,

*invites Member States*

1. to create and promote policies aimed at expanding opportunities and enhancing human potential to leverage telecommunications/ICTs focused on ICT-based education, training and skills development;
2. to take into consideration the development of human resources and capacity building for the digital economy in the development of national digital strategies for sustainable development,

*invites Member States and other stakeholders*

1. to explore ways and means for greater collaboration and coordination among governments, the private sector, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the Internet technical community and academia to implement human skills development in telecommunications/ICT and digital technologies, especially in developing countries, to apply telecommunications/ICTs effectively;
2. to foster the incorporation of telecommunications/ICT, digital literacy, and the development of ICT skills and higher-order cognitive skills into education and human resources development for all groups,

*requests the Secretary-General*

to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant ITU capacity building programs and activities.

**OPINION [X] on mobilizing an enabling policy environment to foster the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development**

The sixth World Telecommunication Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Resolution 2 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on the world telecommunication/information and communication technology policy forum (WTPF);

b) Resolution 201 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference on Creating an enabling environment for the deployment and use of information and communication technology applications;

c) Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, on bridging the digital divide, especially the role of information and communication technology (ICT) applications that regard;

d) Resolution 137 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on next-generation network deployment in developing countries;

e) Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunications/ICTs to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;

f) Resolution 140 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on ITU's role in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS),

*recognizing*

that the theme of Decision 611 is to consider policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development, which will depend on policies that foster an enabling policy environment;

*considering*

a) that the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023 aims to foster an enabling policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development;

b) that the ITU’s report *Bridging the digital innovation divide: A toolkit for strengthening ICT centric ecosystems* identified innovation as being a product of “a complex process incorporating investment, education, networking, community building, cultural change, economic factors and serendipity”;

c) the Buenos Aires Declaration and the Buenos Aires Action Plan adopted at the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), and in particular Objective 3 related to fostering an enabling environment conducive to sustainable telecommunications/ICT development;

d) that the Preamble of the ITU Constitution fully recognizes the sovereign right of each State to regulate its telecommunications policy,

*is of the view*

a) that an enabling policy environment is one that promotes competition and improves the range of all services to businesses, consumers, academic institutions, and all relevant stakeholders;

b) that an enabling environment for the development of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs is based on transparent, stable, predictable, non-discriminatory policies that promote innovation and investment, from both public and private sources ;

c) that the promotion of an enabling telecommunications/ICT policy environment will lead to the further mobilization of new and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things (IoT), and fifth-generation mobile telecommunications technologies (5G), that generate tremendous socio-economic benefits and increased productivity;

d) that removing barriers to investment and innovation is essential to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

e) that various stakeholders including policymakers, regulators, the private sector, consumers, academic institutions, and others play an important role in creating an enabling environment that mobilizes new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

f) that further education and training are critically important in order to develop and/or maintain skills and increase participation in the digital economy and empower users, leading to further mobilization of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

g) that stakeholders should continue to work together to encourage and promote exchanges of information and capacity building best practices to create an enabling policy environment for the mobilization of new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs;

h) that the promotion of enabling policy environments is also critical to the mobilization of existing telecommunication/ICTs,

*invites*

Member States, Sector Members, and all interested stakeholders to work in a collaborative manner to:

* adopt enabling policy environments in order to fully mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs that generate tremendous socio-economic benefits and increased productivity through the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, IoT, and 5G;
* remove barriers to investment and innovation in order to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* consult with all stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, civil society, and the Internet technical community to ensure an enabling policy environment implemented at the national level reflects stakeholder views and needs;
* increase investment in network infrastructure deployment, including 5G and next-generation technologies, in order to strengthen ubiquitous Internet connectivity, which will mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* promote competition and encourage private sector investment in order to encourage the continuing growth and adoption of new and emerging technologies that will promote economic growth and opportunities at the national, regional, and global levels;
* promote access to education and skills development and maintenance including e-learning opportunities, particularly in rural and remote areas;
* work with diverse stakeholders to improve skills at all levels and in a range of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* foster policy environments based on transparency, stability, predictability, and non-discriminatory measures, and the promotion of innovation;
* consider how best to ensure that regulatory frameworks maintain a separation between policy, regulator and sector operation functions in order to ensure a transparent, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory regulatory environment;
* share information, best practices and lessons learned from national and regional efforts to implement an enabling policy environment to promote new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

**OPINION [X] – Mobilizing new solutions for connectivity**

The Sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Opinion 2 (Geneva, 2013) of the Fifth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum, on fostering an enabling environment for the greater growth and development of broadband connectivity;

b) Resolution 137 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on next-generation network deployment in developing countries;

c) Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunications/ICTs to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;

d) Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT, including broadband, for sustainable development;

e) Resolution 203 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on connectivity to broadband networks,

*recognizing*

a) that new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs ecosystems, including next generation wireless connectivity such as 5G, will underpin the digital economy of the future and enable advances in technologies and services including AI, IoT, Big Data, and OTTs;

b) that connectivity empowers families, people, societies, and businesses, playing a fundamental role for the social, economic, cultural and environmental development of society as a whole;

c) that encouraging the deployment of next generation networks, including 5G and other new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs especially in unserved and underserved areas, is critical for sustainable development;

d) that there remains a digital divide between certain segments of populations who can access, afford, and adopt new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs and those who cannot, and that the digital divide, particularly any obstacles in access to and use by women and girls, will affect prosperity and limit social and sustainable economic development;

e) that the private sector has a leading role in deploying 5G and other new and emerging telecommunication/ICT networks, including non-terrestrial technologies such as satellite, and that it is exploring innovations in technology and business models alongside other stakeholders including government, academia, and civil society;

f) that policymakers can help connect the unconnected by creating an enabling policy environment that encourages and supports private sector investment and innovation;

g) that the Preamble of the ITU Constitution fully recognizes the sovereign right of each Member State to decide on its own telecommunications policy,

*is of the view*

that the following policies can be used to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development:

* streamlining the processes to facilitate deployment of wireless and wireline communications networks, including policies for access to rights-of-way, permitting processes, and other rules that may affect infrastructure siting and next generation network deployment;
* modernizing or eliminating outdated rules and policies that make it more difficult for the private sector to invest, innovate, and upgrade their existing networks to new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* educating all levels of society – especially local government officials responsible for permitting wireless and wireline infrastructure – about the importance of next generation connectivity for political, economic, social and cultural progress and the established safety standards for devices emitting electromagnetic fields;
* making sufficient spectrum available for a wide array of new and emerging telecommunications/ICT and services, including 5G, in high, mid, and low band spectrum;
* modernizing regulatory frameworks applicable to small cell infrastructure, which is essential to deployment of next generation services including 5G, and recognizing that not all rules applicable to the large cell towers would be appropriate for small cell infrastructure deployment framework;
* adopting flexible, streamlined, technology neutral, and innovative spectrum policies, including creating new opportunities for unlicensed spectrum uses, increasing opportunities for experimental uses of spectrum, and allowing incumbent spectrum license holders to refarm their spectrum for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* supporting private sector investment in rural and remote areas using targeted government support where the business case for private investment is otherwise lacking, including through the use of a universal service fund and technology-neutral mechanisms such as reverse auctions;
* providing support to educational, healthcare, and other anchor institutions in order to encourage them to adopt new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
* reliably mapping the coverage of existing networks in order to identify where broadband service is currently available, where it is still needed, and using that information to guide and shape policy responses;
* ensuring that access to network connectivity, including for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, are fully incorporated into country economic and social development plans and strategies, and is seen as central to a country’s ongoing economic and social development,

*invites Member States*

to consider whether the adoption of the policies above would contribute to sustainable development in their own national context,

*invites Member States and other stakeholders*

to continue to contribute their own experiences on 5G, connectivity, and bridging the digital divide to the ongoing discussions at the ITU on promoting sustainable development.

1. ITU. 2019. *Measuring digital development Facts and figures 2019*. Geneva: International Telecommunication Union. Available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2019.pdf> [Accessed 05/12/2019]. p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)