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| **Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues Sixteenth meeting – Virtual meeting, 23 September 2021** |  |
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**Contribution by the United States of America**

CONTRIBUTION TO THE SEPTEMBER 23 ITU COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (CWG-INTERNET)

**Introduction**

The United States is pleased to submit this contribution to the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet) for consideration during its September 23, 2021, meeting.

**Discussion**

The United States continues to believe, based on extensive experience, that it is critical for the CWG-Internet to solicit the views of diverse stakeholder groups, including private industry, civil society, and the technical community in addition to governments themselves. Proactively encouraging contributions on Internet-related matters from non-government entities is an effective means of fully informing discussions in the CWG-Internet.

**Proposal**

For nearly forty years, the principles of universality and interoperability underpinning the Internet have enabled it to grow into an unprecedented engine for social impact, cultural innovation, and economic growth. Most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has put these principles to the test and the results are clear: the Internet is a vital tool that directly impacts social, economic, and physical outcomes. Importantly, the pandemic has demonstrated the scalability and resiliency of networks to meet this increased surge in global demand for traffic. With increased requirements for Internet connectivity to support schooling and working from home, telemedicine applications, arts and entertainment, and keeping families and friends connected, Internet connectivity has never been more important. Networks scaled to meet this surge of demand and regulators and policymakers stepped in to make more spectrum available and take other actions to reduce barriers and support additional network capacity and deployment.

Yet the pandemic also exposed that we still have more work to do to reach universal connectivity. As we look to connect the unconnected and address inequalities in access and adoption, it is more important than ever that we ensure that connectivity is both reliable and universal. We need to ensure that the next billion users are also afforded opportunities for economic and social development the Internet provides. This critical task requires renewed and redoubled efforts across all stakeholders to identify and implement the innovative technologies, approaches and policy tools that will support universal connectivity.

Given these trends, the United States proposes the following question for open consultations:

1. How can we create lasting global partnerships to bring meaningful universal connectivity to the remaining 3.7 people who are unconnected around the world?
2. How can universal connectivity empower communities with the technologies and applications that can contribute to their economic growth and well-being?
3. What are the range of community stakeholders that governments should engage when planning for universal connectivity, and what are best practices for such engagement and inclusion?

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