



General Secretariat (SG)

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Geneva, 6 May 2021

To: ITU Member States,
Sector Members, Associates
and Academia

**Subject: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD), 17 May 2021
“Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times”**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to invite you to the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2021 (WTISD 2021) virtual celebration that will take place on Monday, 17 May, from 13:00 to 14:30 (CEST) during the last week of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2021.

This year's theme, "Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times", reflects the key role of information and communication technologies (ICTs), but also the startling digital inequalities between and within countries. View this year's [Advocacy toolkit](#) and [Call to Action](#).

WTISD 2021 aims to promote the acceleration of digital transformation, particularly in these unprecedented times. Governments, businesses, UN bodies, academia, civil society and other stakeholders need to enhance their cooperation and reinforce the development of digital strategies and other technology-driven initiatives. Countries must continue to leverage telecommunication and ICTs through digital policies and strategies to support adaptation and ensure a timely, effective response to current and future challenges.

ITU will celebrate WTISD 2021 with a virtual high-level panel addressing the need for enhanced collaboration and cooperation on ICTs and telecommunication across countries and sectors. ITU members and partners will showcase how they are accelerating digital transformation – both to meet today's challenges and to prepare for future challenging times. See the [programme](#) and [register](#).

Finally, we would like to share the message received from the UN Secretary General, Mr António Guterres, on the occasion of WTISD 2021 (see Annex), and to give visibility to the celebrations taking place around the world, invite you to submit the activities that you will be organizing to celebrate WTISD-2021, using the template available on the [WTISD website](#).

Thank you in advance for your contributions and I look forward to celebrating World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2021 together, around the world.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Houlin Zhao
Secretary-General

Annex: 1

Annex 1

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE FOR WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION
SOCIETY DAY**

17 May 2021

Digital technologies sustain life, work, health and learning for billions of people. In the face of COVID-19, businesses, governments and the digital community have proven resilient and innovative, helping to protect lives and livelihoods. These challenging times have accelerated the transformation everywhere.

Yet 3.7 billion people – nearly half the world’s population – remain unconnected to the Internet; and of these, the majority are women. They, too, must be included if we are to make the possibilities of 5G, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, digital health and other technologies truly transformative and sustainable.

We must also protect against the dangers of digital technologies, from the spread of hatred and misinformation to cyberattacks and the exploitation of our data.

The United Nations, through a Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the vital work of the International Telecommunication Union, aims to make the transformation equitable, safe, inclusive and affordable for all, with full respect for human rights.

On World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, let us commit to work together to defeat COVID-19 and ensure that digital technologies are a force for good that help us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind.