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Report by the ITU Secretary-General for the Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum 2021

1. Preamble

1.1 The Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum 2021 (WTPF-21)

1.1.1 Originally established by the 1994 Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum (WTPF) has been successfully convened in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2009 and 2013. By [Resolution 2 \(Rev. Dubai, 2018\)](#), the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU resolved to hold the next WTPF in 2021.

1.1.2 The purpose of WTPF is to provide a venue for exchanging views and information and thereby creating a shared vision among policymakers worldwide on the issues arising from the emergence of new telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, and to consider any other policy issue in telecommunications/ICTs which would benefit from a global exchange of views, in addition to the adoption of opinions reflecting common viewpoints ([Resolution 2 \(Rev. Dubai, 2018\)](#)).

1.1.3 By [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#), the 2019 session of ITU Council decided that the theme for WTPF-21 is as follows:

“Policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development:

The WTPF-21 would discuss how new and emerging digital technologies and trends are enablers of the global transition to the digital economy. Themes for consideration include AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data, OTTs etc. In this regard, the WTPF-21 will focus on opportunities, challenges and policies to foster sustainable development.”

1.1.4 WTPF-21 shall not produce prescriptive regulatory outcomes; however, it shall prepare reports and adopt non-binding opinions by consensus for consideration by Member States, Sector Members, and relevant ITU meetings ([Resolution 2 \(Rev. Dubai, 2018\)](#)).

1.1.5 All information relating to WTPF-21 is posted on www.itu.int/wtpf.

1.2 Preparatory process for the ITU Secretary-General's Report

1.2.1 Discussions at WTPF-21 shall be based solely on a single report by the ITU Secretary-General, and contributions from participants based on that report, prepared in accordance with a procedure adopted by the Council and based on the proposals of Member States and Sector Members, and on the views of Associates, Academia and stakeholders, and WTPF shall not consider drafts of any new Opinions that were not presented during the preparatory period foreseen for drawing up the Secretary-General's report prior to the Forum ([Resolution 2 \(Rev. Dubai, 2018\)](#)). This report by the Secretary-General ("Report") outlines a potential scope for discussions and presents some of the policy issues under consideration among different stakeholder groups on the theme of WTPF-21 as stated in Council [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#) and referred to in para 1.1.3 above. It also presents the Draft Opinions agreed by the IEG-WTPF-21 in the Annex.

1.2.2 In accordance with [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#), the ITU Secretary-General convened an Informal Experts Group (IEG), each of whom was active in preparing for WTPF-21 in this regard.

1.2.3 The preparatory process was guided by the timetable set out as Annex 2 in [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#) and in Table 1 below, with an additional meeting in November 2021 as decided by Council Member States through a decision by correspondence in July 2021.

Table 1: Timetable for the elaboration of the ITU Secretary-General's Report

1 August, 2019	A First Draft outline of the report by the Secretary-General shall be posted online for comments
21 August, 2019	Deadline for receipt of comments on the First Draft Deadline for nominations for a balanced group of experts to advise the Secretary-General on further elaboration of the report and of draft Opinions associated with it
1st IEG Meeting (23-24 September 2019)	First meeting of the group of experts to discuss the First Draft of the report by the Secretary-General and the comments received
1 November, 2019	The Second Draft of the report by the Secretary-General will be posted online, incorporating discussions from the 1st IEG meeting This draft will also be made available online for open public consultations
23 December, 2019	Deadline for receipt of comments on the Second Draft, and for contribution on broad outlines for possible draft Opinions Deadline for inputs from the open public consultations
2nd IEG Meeting (10-11 February 2020)	Second meeting of the group of experts to discuss the Second Draft of the report by the Secretary-General and the comments received, including from the open public consultation
1 April, 2020	The Third Draft of the report by the Secretary-General will be posted online, incorporating discussions from the 2 nd IEG meeting and including outlines of draft Opinions. This draft will also be made available online for open public consultations

15 June, 2020	<p>Deadline for receipt of comments on the Third Draft, and for contribution on possible draft Opinions</p> <p>Deadline for inputs from the open public consultations</p>
3rd IEG Meeting (14-16 September 2020)	Third meeting of the group of experts to discuss the Third Draft of the report by the Secretary-General and the comments received, including from the open public consultation
1 November, 2020	The Fourth Draft of the report by the Secretary-General will be posted online, including the draft Opinions, and incorporating discussions from the 3rd IEG meeting
23 December, 2020	Deadline for receipt of comments on the Fourth Draft
4th IEG Meeting (1-2 February 2021)	Fourth meeting of the group of experts to discuss the Fourth Draft of the report by the Secretary-General, including the draft Opinions, and the comments received
15 March, 2021	<p>The Fifth Draft of the report by the Secretary-General will be posted online, incorporating discussions from the 4th IEG meeting, and including the text of the possible draft Opinions as an Annex.</p> <p>This draft will also be made available online for open public consultations.</p>
1 May, 2021	<p>Deadline for receipt of comments on the Fifth Draft, including the possible draft Opinions.</p> <p>Deadline for receipt of comments from the open public consultation.</p>
5th IEG Virtual Meeting (31 May-2 June 2021)	Fifth meeting of the group of experts to discuss the Fifth Draft of the report by the Secretary-General, as well as the draft Opinions and the comments received, including from the open public consultation.
1 July, 2021	The Sixth Draft of the report by the Secretary-General will be posted online incorporating discussions from the 5th IEG meeting and including the draft Opinions as an Annex
15 August, 2021	Deadline for receipt of comments on the Sixth Draft, including the text of the draft Opinions.
6th IEG Meeting (24, 27 and 28 September 2021)	Sixth meeting of the group of experts to discuss the Sixth Draft Report by the Secretary-General, as well as the draft Opinions and the comments received.

3 November, 2021	Deadline for receipt of contributions for the 7th IEG meeting
7th IEG Meeting (15-17 November 2021)	Seventh meeting of the group of experts to finalize the Draft Report by the Secretary-General, including the final text of the draft Opinions to be submitted to the Sixth WTPF
1 December, 2021	The final report of the Secretary-General to WTPF will be posted online, including the draft Opinions.
16-18 December, 2021	Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum, Geneva.

2. Themes for WTPF-21

2.1 By [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#), the 2019 session of Council decided that the theme for WTPF-21 is as set out in para 1.1.3.

2.2 This theme has the potential to contribute to sustainable development for achieving the SDGs, within the WSIS framework. As the world sees breakthroughs in technologies and trends transforming the global digital economy, it must address issues across diverse sectors such as health, education, employment, environment, transportation, agriculture, nutrition, disability, youth empowerment, social inclusion, gender equality and poverty reduction.

2.3 Realizing this potential depends on several factors including fostering an enabling policy environment that promotes investment and innovation through competition, capacity building, transparency, flexibility and the active participation of all relevant stakeholders. Promoting innovation and investment, including by removing barriers, is essential to enable the global transition to the digital economy.

2.4 This transformative potential brings both significant opportunities and complex policy challenges in various social, economic, technical, environmental and developmental fields. Some of these opportunities and challenges are not new, and the world has previously witnessed similar transformations across society, industry and economy that have led to new models of growth and innovation. There is a policy imperative to learn from these past experiences to better inform strategies to maximize the opportunities and address the challenges of telecommunications/ICTs and foster innovation for sustainable development through balanced and considered policies.

2.5 It is important to recognize and address the particular challenges faced by developing countries in mobilizing new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development.

2.6 Supporting an enabling environment through effective policymaking in this respect is critical for facilitating efforts, particularly in developing and least developed countries, to promote innovation related to telecommunications/ICTs that contributes toward sustainable development. Policy-making considerations include, *inter alia*, infrastructure needs, investment, regulatory environment, training and skills development, consumer protection, gender equality, market environment, institutional cooperation, the role of development aid, etc.

2.7 Considering the related opportunities, challenges, and policies, some of the broad questions that could be addressed in furtherance of the theme are set out below.

Some experts suggested that the Report should focus primarily on the issue of policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, which, as well as being broader in scope, is the theme of WTPF-21 and encompasses any related issues of opportunities and challenges. It was further recommended that this Report should avoid being overly prescriptive.

2.7.1 Looking ahead, what are the new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies that ITU membership considers to be key enablers of the global transition to the digital economy? Given the inter-connections or -dependencies in the use and deployment, what is the role that policymakers and other stakeholders can play in fostering an enabling environment for sustainable development?

2.7.2 How does ITU membership envision the role of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies in contributing to sustainable development, keeping in mind the current and future needs of both developing and developed countries as well as all segments of the population? What are the trends and best practices in developing whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder collaborative policy approaches that are forward-looking, flexible and evidence-based that can contribute to this goal?

2.7.3 What are the key opportunities and challenges facing the mobilization of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development? What are the issues for their development and deployment?

2.7.4 What opportunities and challenges may arise from mobilizing new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development? What policies should be considered in this regard to protect interests of all people and especially the most vulnerable groups of the population? What role should ITU play in this process within its mandate?

2.7.5 How can policymakers and other stakeholders foster an environment that safeguards users, especially the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls, persons with disabilities and specific needs, and older persons, when using new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies?

2.7.6 How can the benefits of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies be made more accessible to all? Along with the challenge of connecting the unconnected through infrastructure and complementary access solutions, what can be done to endeavor to ensure affordable access for everyone, particularly women and girls, to build the skills necessary to leverage a changing environment where people can learn, share, and engage; to foster incentives for continued innovation; and an environment of trust and inclusion? How can better international cooperation by all stakeholders contribute to these efforts?

Some experts expressed the view that the focus of this question should be on: inclusion, affordability, consumer trust, digital literacy and specifically finding innovative ways to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development, as these are the key aspects to be considered given the theme of the Forum. Other experts were of the opinion that maintaining focus on the broader issues of trust and innovation would be better. In particular on the issue of “trust”, these experts stressed that building trust in new and emerging digital technologies will be key to promoting wider engagement with these technologies, and that the concept of “trust” is wider than just consumer trust and digital literacy.

2.7.7 What policies are needed to promote education, skills and training to develop a skilled workforce? How can policymakers and other stakeholders help to identify, retain and develop the necessary skills base?

2.7.8 How can policymakers build an enabling environment for investment? What policies can help ensure that the regulatory and market environments help mobilize new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development?

2.7.9 How can stakeholders build local and inclusive participation in policymaking and innovation ecosystems that enhance consumer trust and enable the deployment and use of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development?

2.7.10 What measures can be taken to promote multi-stakeholder collaboration in order to enable developing countries to access the benefits generated by a digital economy?

2.7.11 What are the ways in which stakeholders, including in underserved areas, can work together to facilitate greater innovative access to new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, including interoperability and complementary access solutions?

2.7.12 How can ITU and other international fora continue to collaborate more closely, through the WSIS process, in supporting the use of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to achieve sustainable development?

2.8 Some themes for consideration

[Decision 611](#) (Rev. Council 2020) lists some themes for consideration as indicated below.

Some experts noted that the following themes should be addressed in the Secretary-General's Report through the lens of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs. They recommended against including standalone sections on these themes to align more closely with the WTPF-21 theme and the ITU's mandate. Other experts were of the view that [Decision 611 \(Rev. Council 2020\)](#) recognized the following themes explicitly and therefore, recommended that each of them should be discussed separately and incorporated as standalone sections in the Report.

2.8.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

2.8.1.1 AI solutions and technologies have the potential to transform areas as diverse and critical as education, healthcare, finance, mobility, agriculture, energy, accessibility and connectivity. They bring with them opportunities, challenges and risks.

2.8.1.2 Some examples of AI-related policy questions that could be considered include:

- a. How can AI solutions and technologies that facilitate and enhance the use of telecommunication/ICTs be used to achieve sustainable development? What are the key policy imperatives driving decision-makers to explore and harness the potential of AI-based solutions and technologies to enable sustainable development, including the transition to a digital economy?
- b. How can developing countries harness the benefits of AI solutions and technologies that facilitate and enhance the use of telecommunications/ICTs?
- c. What are the challenges facing the deployment and use of AI technologies that facilitate and enhance the use of telecommunications/ICTs?
- d. How can stakeholders promote the development and use of AI solutions and technologies that facilitate and enhance the use of telecommunications/ICTs to support sustainable development?
- e. How can AI solutions and technologies that facilitate and enhance the use of telecommunications/ICTs be used to address environmental sustainability?

2.8.2 Internet of Things (IoT)

2.8.2.1 The IoT and connected devices are driving improvements to economic growth and human wellbeing in a range of areas such as healthcare, water, agriculture, natural resource management, environment and energy. However, policymakers and other stakeholders may need to address several challenges if they are to capture its full potential.

2.8.2.2 Some examples of IoT-related policy questions that could be considered include:

- a. How can the development and deployment of IoT promote sustainable development?
- b. What are the key challenges and opportunities that policy-makers and other stakeholders face in developing ecosystems that best support the cross-sectoral, public and private nature of such applications?
- c. What steps can be taken by all stakeholders to safeguard users and infrastructure and promote affordability, accessibility, and inclusive access of IoT systems across countries and populations?
- d. What role and priority tasks should be performed within ITU to create opportunities for the development and implementation of IoT in Member States?

2.8.3 5G

2.8.3.1 5G has the potential to be one of the key technologies enabling tomorrow's digital economy, linking everything from smartphones to wireless sensors and industrial robots to self-driving cars. 5G could play a key role in transforming cities and rural communities into smart cities/communities - allowing citizens and communities to realize and participate in the benefits delivered by an advanced digital economy. Fostering the potential of 5G's capabilities will require addressing several elements relating to its deployment including, *inter alia*, costs and infrastructure.

2.8.3.2 In this respect, some essential questions include:

- a. How can 5G promote sustainable development? What are some of the key uses/applications of 5G technologies that can drive adoption? What are the main challenges relating to deployment of such technologies?
- b. What can policymakers and other stakeholders do to develop policies and strategies that support effective solutions, including existing deployments and new 5G deployments, to provide benefit and access to all?
- c. What steps can all stakeholders take to foster a 5G innovation ecosystem and new business models to maximize the benefits for all while minimizing associated costs, financial and otherwise?

2.8.4 Big Data

2.8.4.1 Experts recognized that the opportunities and challenges posed by Big Data are significant.

2.8.4.2 Big Data has the potential to create significant value for the world economy and consumers everywhere - enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the private and public sector globally. However, policymakers and other stakeholders may need to address several challenges if they are to capture its full potential.

2.8.4.3 In this respect, some of the key questions to be considered when mobilizing Big Data for sustainable development include:

- a. How can Big Data promote sustainable development? In this regard, what tools, technologies and techniques can stakeholders apply to fully harness the potential of Big Data?
- b. What are the key steps that policymakers and other stakeholders could consider to ensure that the use and application of Big Data benefits and provides safeguards to all?
- c. How can the challenges associated with Big Data be addressed? How can stakeholders realize the benefits of Big Data in a responsible manner? What can be done to ensure that Big Data applications also respond to those left furthest behind?
- d. How can stakeholders collaborate to develop an approach for harnessing the potential benefits of Big Data for sustainable development?

2.8.5 OTTs

2.8.5.1 The emergence of OTTs has been driving growth, connecting people, and advancing innovation in the global economy. OTTs are reshaping and expanding the entire communications ecosystem, while also providing social and economic benefits to consumers worldwide and the global economy.

2.8.5.2 At the same time, the economic impact on the traditional model of the telecommunications industry and on telecom operators is being increasingly analyzed, including developing a better understanding of how policies can mobilize OTTs for sustainable development.

2.8.5.3 In this regard, some examples of OTT-related policy questions that could be considered include:

- a. What are some of the key policy opportunities and challenges associated with OTTs regarding sustainable development?
- b. What are the key safeguards that policymakers, OTT players and other stakeholders could consider to ensure that the use of OTTs benefits all?
- c. What approaches might be considered regarding OTTs to help foster an environment that promotes competition and improves the range of OTT services to all stakeholders?
- d. How can OTT players and telecom operators best engage with one another at a local and international level?
- e. How can OTTs contribute to economic development?
- f. What approaches might be considered regarding OTTs to enhance the inclusion of disadvantaged populations?
- g. How should ITU further promote cooperation and dialogue among ITU Members as well as other stakeholders on activities related to OTT, including the dissemination of best practices, especially for developing countries?

2.8.6 Mobilizing New Solutions for Connectivity

2.8.6.1 New and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies have the power to transform lives, offering life-enhancing financial, health, education, and many other services, the ability to participate in the digital economy, and the means to participate in communities.

2.8.6.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has only further demonstrated the vital importance of connectivity globally, highlighting the centrality of telecommunications/ICTs to providing access to basic services as well as supporting critical needs.

2.8.6.3 Yet millions of people in new and emerging markets lack access to these services, due to the limited reach of reliable, secure, and affordable communications infrastructure in many countries. In addition, low income populations with access frequently do not use services, because of constraints arising from limited affordability and social norms that can bar access to communications technology to certain vulnerable populations such as women and girls and persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.

2.8.6.4 To bridge these gaps, innovations in technology, business plans and funding models are being developed and explored by providers, governments, academia, and civil society actors. These include but are not limited to: low-cost solar-powered mobile radios that can open up rural areas to new connectivity options; new, high-capacity satellite services systems that can offer lower cost internet access to remote locations; and innovative business models including complementary access solutions that deliberately work to provide services to local communities and involve them in bringing down

barriers to technology use. The success of these types of solutions relies fundamentally on an underlying infrastructure that can deliver high-quality and high-bandwidth connectivity.

2.8.6.5 In this respect, some of the key questions to be considered include:

- a. What types of technologies and innovative business models, including complementary access solutions, should decision-makers learn more about when determining how to address connectivity, access and usage gaps in their own unique market contexts?
- b. How can interest in innovation be mobilized in the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to solve unique market contexts of new and emerging markets?
- c. How to more closely align funding mechanisms to mobilize new solutions for connectivity?
- d. How to facilitate greater collaboration and knowledge sharing between innovators, investors and communities to accelerate the development of these innovations?
- e. What are the challenges and opportunities mobilizing new solutions for expanding Internet connectivity, particularly to remote and under-served areas?

ANNEX: DRAFT OPINIONS FOR THE SIXTH WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION/INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY FORUM 2021

**DRAFT OPINION 1: Enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and
emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development**

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

recalling

- a) Resolution 75/202 of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on “Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development”;
- b) UNGA Resolution 70/1 on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;
- c) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on “Strategic Plan for the Union for 2020-2023”, which aims to foster an enabling policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development;
- d) Resolution 201 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Creating an enabling environment for the deployment and use of information and communication technology applications”;
- e) Opinion 2 (Geneva, 2013) of the Fifth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Policy Forum on “Fostering an enabling environment for the greater growth and development of broadband connectivity”;
- f) Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/information and communication technology, including broadband, for sustainable development”,

considering

- a) that effective “*policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development,*” depend on a thorough understanding of issues such as access and inclusion, affordability, confidence and security, digital literacy, training and skills development;
- b) that the Preamble of the ITU Constitution fully recognizes the sovereign right of each Member State to decide on its own telecommunications policy;
- c) 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 telecommunication/ICT services and technologies;
- d) 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;
- e) that the ITU 2018 report on “ICTs, LDCs and the SDGs: Achieving universal and affordable Internet in the least developed countries” notes that an enabling environment for investment and innovation in the broadband market includes “*liberalization of the sector, privatization of state-owned national incumbent operators, and separation between policy, regulator and sector operation functions, with a view to encouraging competition and foreign direct investment, and promoting universal access, innovation, content delivery and consumer protection,*”

recognising

- a) that accelerating broadband development is a considerable challenge, especially in hard-to-reach, rural and remote areas where topography and demography make the return-on-investment challenging;
- b) that investments in telecommunication/ICT services and technologies should also focus on all stages of development and deployment, including their mobilization for sustainable development at later stages;

- c) that among sectors and stakeholders, ICT investments, including those in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, and complementary access solutions, should be coordinated to avoid fragmentation and duplication of efforts;
- d) that effective enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies should consider building confidence and security in those telecommunication/ICT services and technologies;
- e) that a coordinated government approach can play a role in support of a coordinated approach to ICT financing and investments with the aim of connecting the unconnected and driving the development of the services and technologies referred to in *recognizing 'b'* above that are central to the digital economy, digital inclusion and sustainable development;
- f) that the Buenos Aires Declaration adopted by the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference states "*that public investment, private investment, as well as public-private partnerships and resource mobilization, need to be further strengthened in order to identify and apply innovative technological solutions and financing mechanisms for inclusive and sustainable development*",

is of the view

- 1. that inclusive access to and use of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies and new and emerging technologies such as 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data, and OTTs, have the potential to accelerate progress across the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- 2. that the establishment of an enabling environment for investment is critical to mobilizing such services and technologies as mentioned in *is of the view '1'* above for sustainable development;
- 3. that the removal of barriers to investment and innovation is essential to mobilizing the services and technologies mentioned in *is of the view '1'* above for sustainable development;
- 4. that facilitating investment alongside private sector investment in rural and remote areas by using targeted government support may be needed where the business case for private investment is otherwise lacking, and in support of affordable connectivity and mobilizing such services and technologies as mentioned in *is of the view '1'* for sustainable development;
- 5. that use of services and technologies as mentioned in *is of the view '1'* for sustainable development can empower marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people.;
- 6. that use of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, and complementary access solutions can promote sustainable development, and that policies in the field of telecommunications/ICTs should consider environmental challenges such as climate change mitigation;
- 7. that an enabling environment for the development and deployment of services and technologies as mentioned in *is of the view '1'* is based on transparent, stable, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory policies and regulatory and legal environments that promote innovation and investment, from both public and private sources;
- 8. that stakeholders should continue to work together to encourage and promote exchange of information, capacity building, and best practices to create an enabling environment for the mobilization of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies,

invites Member States

- 1. to consider how best to foster an enabling environment that is conducive for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, as well as complementary access solutions for sustainable development, to maximize their benefits, and minimize their risks;
- 2. to consider adopting policies and frameworks that support, *inter alia*, a transparent, predictable, competitive, independent, innovative and non-discriminatory enabling environment;

3. to take a coordinated government approach to telecommunication/ICT financing and investments, including for investments in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development;
4. to encourage foreign and domestic investments in digital ecosystems and consider removing barriers in this regard;
5. to consider how best to make it easier for the private sector to invest, innovate and upgrade existing networks and encourage long term and sustained investment from the private sector in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies;
6. to adopt flexible, streamlined, technology neutral, and innovative spectrum policies to encourage the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies;
7. to foster an awareness of environmental challenges such as climate change and its mitigation in developing policies to advance sustainable development,

invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively

1. to consider policies that enable the mobilization, including development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development;
2. to consider policies and frameworks that take into account evolving business models, and create a fair and conducive enabling environment for stakeholders that allows them to contribute to promoting economic development;
3. to facilitate an enabling environment through innovative access to finance, including through public-private partnership models;
4. to promote infrastructure sharing models in order to reduce the costs of investment in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, and their applications;
5. to promote competition and private sector investment to encourage the continuing growth and adoption of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies that will advance economic growth and opportunities at the national, regional and global levels;
6. to foster policy environments based on transparency, stability, predictability, competitiveness and non-discriminatory measures, and the promotion of innovation;
7. to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in local populations, including by encouraging community support for entrepreneurship and locally based programmes, including those for complementary solutions and networks;
8. to encourage the private sector to develop applications and services integrating new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, taking into account diverse user needs by working with marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people;
9. to facilitate public-private investment by promoting closer cooperation between education and research centres and the private sector in emerging areas;
10. to consult with all stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, civil society, and the technical community to ensure that an enabling policy environment implemented at the national level reflects stakeholder views and needs;
11. to share best practices regarding the development of enabling environments for investment,

invites the Secretary-General

to continue to strengthen ITU efforts to provide a platform for collaboration and dialogue among key stakeholders, including Member States, the private sector, academia, industry and international funding agencies to enable them to foster an enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies that promotes innovation and investment and advances sustainable development.

DRAFT OPINION 2: Affordable and secure connectivity in mobilising new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development

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

recalling

- a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- b) UNGA Resolution 70/125: Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);
- c) the Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action, adopted in 2003, and the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted in 2005, all of which were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA);
- d) Resolution 101 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on Internet Protocol-based networks;
- e) [Resolution 102 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and the management of Internet resources, including domain names and addresses];
- f) Resolution 130 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies;
- g) Resolution 137 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on next-generation network deployment in developing countries;
- h) Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT;
- i) Resolution 203 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on connectivity to broadband networks,

recognising

- a) that new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs services and technologies will underpin the digital economy of the future and enable advances in technologies and services including AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs;
- b) that to enable such advances in technologies and services, including 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs, in the context of a multi-stakeholder approach, it is important to increase awareness of relevant cybersecurity and other risks among individual users and other stakeholders, and to take measures to continue building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs.
- c) that governments are pursuing digital transformations by adopting new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs services and technologies to deliver services to the public, recognizing that building confidence and security in those services is crucial in that context;
- d) 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;
- 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 new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs services and technologies are rapidly evolving, bringing new opportunities and challenges to all stakeholders, including policymakers, such as those related to building confidence and security in the use of such technologies;
- g) that a digital divide remains between certain segments of populations who can access, afford and adopt new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs and those who cannot, and that in particular, obstacles in access to and use by women and girls affect prosperity and limit social and sustainable economic development;
- h) that policymakers can help connect the unconnected by creating an enabling policy environment that encourages and supports private sector investment and innovation;
- i) that frameworks, such as the ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) framework, can encourage confidence and security in the use of telecommunication/ICTs, including through international cooperation in this regard;
- j) that as the lead facilitator for the WSIS Action Line C5, the ITU has an important role in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, through the on-going implementation of relevant ITU resolutions and the work of dedicated Study Groups and Questions,

reaffirming

- a) the importance of communication and access to means of communication for everyone;
- b) the need for greater global multi-stakeholder cooperation to bridge the digital divide and to mitigate the challenges to building confidence and security in the use of telecommunication/ICTs,

noting

the call by the UN General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet by 2030,

is of the view

- a) that all stakeholders, including governments, should endeavour to work towards building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, including through frameworks such as the GCA, and in the context of enabling advances in the use of technologies and services, including 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs;
- b) that there is a need for global multi-stakeholder cooperation to enable advances in technologies and services including 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs, in the context of expanding affordable connectivity and building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs;
- c) that investment in infrastructure, in particular in broadband and 5G infrastructure, plays a fundamental role in promoting affordable connectivity and in mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;
- d) that all stakeholders should [endeavour to protect [personally identifiable information] [privacy] and mitigate vulnerabilities, and] work to strengthen confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, and that particular attention should be paid to ensuring the protection of marginalised groups, vulnerable populations and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people;
- e) that multi-stakeholder efforts to build confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs are essential to ensure increased connectivity solutions for sustainable development;

- f) that within its mandate, the ITU should continue to collaborate closely with other UN agencies, international organizations, and stakeholders in relevant areas concerning building confidence and security in the use of telecommunication/ICTs;
- g) that the following policies can be used to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development:
- i) streamlining the processes to facilitate deployment of wireless and wireline communications networks, including policies for access to rights-of-way and other rules that may affect next-generation network deployment;
 - ii) educating all levels of society – especially local government officials responsible for permitting wireless and wireline infrastructure – about the importance of next generation connectivity for socio-economic progress and the established safety standards for EMF emissions;
 - iii) making sufficient spectrum available for a wide array of new and emerging telecommunications/ICT and services, including 5G, in high, mid and low frequency bands;
 - iv) 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 deployment;
 - v) 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;
 - vi) ensuring that access to network connectivity, including for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, are fully incorporated into national economic and social development plans and strategies, and that it is recognized as central to a country's economic and social development,

invites Member States

1. to consider whether the adoption of the policies above would contribute to sustainable development in their own national context;
2. to continue to promote affordable connectivity, as a fundamental requirement for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;
3. to consider how the use of shared digital services can support sustainable development by lowering the cost of doing business, improving service offerings and enabling access to new markets, particularly in areas such as 5G roll-out;
4. to consider adopting policy and regulatory measures that facilitate infrastructure deployment in rural and isolated areas, including the sharing of infrastructure, interconnection and effective use of spectrum;

invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively

1. to reinforce the existing links between the WSIS Action Lines for which the ITU is the lead facilitator (C2, C4, C5 and C6) and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;
2. to consider policies aimed at benefitting citizens, businesses, governments and other stakeholders, particularly in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs;
3. to increase investment in network infrastructure deployment, including 5G and next-generation technologies, with a view to achieving universal access, which will mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
4. to continue to share their own experiences on deploying terrestrial and non-terrestrial infrastructure for bridging the digital divide to the ongoing discussions at the ITU on promoting sustainable development;
5. to continue to work collaboratively and build confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs including in the application of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs services and technologies;

6. to promote new and potentially transformative initiatives to accelerate connectivity, such as the GIGA initiative of ITU and UNICEF, and the ITU Partner2Connect Digital Coalition;

invites the Secretary-General

to continue to facilitate and strengthen ITU efforts to promote universal, affordable, and secure connectivity for sustainable development through new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs services and technologies for sustainable development.

DRAFT OPINION 3: Digital literacy and skills for inclusive access

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

recalling

- a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;
- b) UNGA Resolution 72/235 on “Human resources development”;
- c) Geneva Declaration of Principles, adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003;
- d) the 2005 WSIS outcome documents;
- e) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) on the “Strategic Plan for the Union for 2020-2023”, *Goal 1 – Growth: Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital economy and society*”;
- f) Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society”;
- g) Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology”;
- h) Resolution 205 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “ITU’s role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society”;
- i) Resolution 40 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference on “Group on capacity-building initiatives”,

considering

- a) that a lack of digital skills is a barrier to the uptake and effective use of the telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) including Internet;
- b) that to capitalize on the benefits of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and keep pace with technology advances, new skills for the digital economy are necessary;
- c) that the development and improvement of human capacity building, including in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, is a fundamental part of an inclusive Information Society and will help promote sustainable development;
- d) that the ITU has been supporting countries in their efforts to use telecommunications/ICTs as a catalyst for development, including provision for assistance with capacity development through a variety of initiatives including the ITU Academy;
- e) that ITU partners with UN organizations, governments, the private sector, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the technical community, academia and other stakeholders to advance programs and initiatives that aim to improve ICT education and equip people, including youth, with digital skills and improve digital literacy;
- f) that there is gender and age gap in digital literacy and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education;
- g) that developing countries¹ face specific challenges in digital skills development,

bearing in mind

- a) that the rapid development of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs creates new requirements and expectations on workers;
- b) that ensuring digital literacy and skills for inclusive access requires a flexible approach to meet the various needs and conditions of each individual country,

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

is of the view

1. that digital skills in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs can help to leverage new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development;
2. that policies fostering digital literacy, training and skills development can be instrumental in mobilizing above mentioned technologies for sustainable development;
3. that education and training in digital skills is critically important to reduce the digital gap and promote equal opportunities between countries with different levels of economic and technological development;
4. that education and training in digital skills are also critically important in order to foster digital empowerment and inclusion, especially among marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people,

invites Member States

1. to collect and share data on the digital literacy and skills required for accessing new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development;
2. to identify gaps in digital skills curricula in education, apprenticeships and other youth and adult job skills development programs;
3. to identify barriers to closing gaps in digital literacy and skills and promote policies aimed at expanding opportunities and building capacities to leverage the abovementioned technologies through education, training and skills development for all,

invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively

1. to explore ways and means for greater collaboration and coordination among governments, the private sector, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the technical community and academia to build digital skills, especially in developing countries;
2. to integrate digital literacy, and the development of ICT and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills into an overall approach to education and human resources development for all;
3. promote access to e-learning opportunities, particularly in rural and remote areas;
4. encourage investment in the quality of teaching, education and training of digital skills, including in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs, and with emphasis on marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people, to promote skills in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development;
5. to share best practices in digital literacy and digital skills-related education, skills and training programmes among ITU Members,

invites the Secretary-General

to support the effective implementation of the relevant ITU capacity building programs and activities that promote education, digital literacy, training and skills development, including on new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, to foster sustainable development and digital empowerment and inclusion for all.

DRAFT OPINION 4: New and emerging technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development

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

recalling

- a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;
- b) UNGA Resolution 70/125 on “Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society”;
- c) relevant World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines and relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- d) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the “Strategic Plan for the Union for 2020-2023”;
- e) Resolution 197 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Facilitating the Internet of Things and smart sustainable cities and communities”;
- f) Resolution 206 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “OTTs”;
- g) Resolution 205 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “ITU's role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society”,

recognising

- a) that the continuous evolution of new and emerging technologies, such as 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs, can facilitate the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) for sustainable development, taking into account the discussions and initiatives underway across the UN system that are exploring diverse aspects of such technologies in support of sustainable development;
- b) that telecommunications/ICTs are an enabler of many new technologies and in turn new technologies can also facilitate the development and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs;
- c) that, by facilitating the use of telecommunications/ICTs, new and emerging technologies, such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data, and OTTs, can enable the global transition to the digital economy and accelerate the benefits of digital transformation for different industries, thereby furthering our shared goal to advance the SDGs;
- d) that while this transition will enable countries to harness the potential of such technologies to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs and advance sustainable development, as countries take advantage of this potential, developing countries² are at the highest risk of being left behind;
- e) that the responsible development and use of such technologies, particularly AI, can help to empower future innovation and address related policy issues, and that stakeholders involved in their development and use should engage in policy discussions, including on accountability and sustainable development;
- f) that it is important to promote building confidence and security in and inclusive development of these technologies as well as to foster equitable access to their benefits;
- g) that enabling strategies, policies, regulations, guidelines or principles may contribute to maximizing the potential of new and emerging technologies to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;
- h) that ITU, as the UN specialized agency for telecommunications/ICTs, plays a leading role in the implementation of relevant WSIS action lines and their outcomes and, through them, the achievement of the SDGs;

² These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

i) that there is ongoing work in ITU, including ITU study groups, related to new and emerging technologies to facilitate the development and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs,

is of the view

1. that Member States, through cooperation with all stakeholders, should foster an enabling environment for digital innovation ecosystems for inclusive growth and development of relevant new and emerging technologies, such as 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs, to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development.
2. that enabling policies to harness opportunities and address challenges related to such technologies need to be addressed at the national, regional and international levels, with the full involvement of stakeholders from countries, especially from developing countries;
3. that all stakeholders need to work closely together to harness the potential of the services and technologies referred to in *is of the view "1"* above for the benefit of all and to advance sustainable development, as well as address any common policy issues and other challenges, *inter alia*, related to confidence and security, reliability, inclusiveness, transparency and interoperability, that may arise in their use;
4. that ITU, in collaboration with other UN agencies and international organizations, and within its mandate, should continue to promote information and best practice sharing among its membership and other stakeholders in their efforts to use technologies referenced in *is of the view "1"* above to facilitate telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;
5. that stakeholders should be encouraged to implement projects, programmes, and initiatives to enable all nations to benefit from the use of such technologies to achieve the SDGs,

invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively

1. to utilize the potential of technologies referred to in *is of the view "1"* above to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs to achieve the SDGs;
2. to promote public policies and strategies at the national, regional, and international levels to take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges in the use and mobilization of technologies referred to in *is of the view "1"* above for sustainable development;
3. to encourage the participation of all stakeholders from developing countries, and in particular from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in the activities of relevant entities, organizations, institutions and initiatives that are working on the various policy matters set out in this Opinion,

invites the Secretary-General

to support the activities of ITU, within its mandate, relevant to the policy matters set out in this Opinion. This includes enabling the ITU membership to share information and best practices in order to take advantage of the opportunities and address the challenges relevant to policy matters set out in this Opinion.

DRAFT OPINION 5: Use of telecommunications/ICTs in COVID-19 and future pandemic and epidemic preparedness and response

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

recalling

- a) Resolution 74/270 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on “Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, which calls on the United Nations system “*to work with all relevant actors to mobilize a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial impact on all societies*”;
- b) UNGA Resolution 74/306 on “Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”;
- c) UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, as well as SDG 9 “Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”, and SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- d) Article 40 of the ITU Constitution on the “Priority of Telecommunications Concerning Safety of Life”;
- e) Chapter VII of the ITU Radio Regulations on “Distress and safety communications” and Article 5 of the International Telecommunication Regulations on the “Safety of Life and Priority of Telecommunications”;
- f) Resolution 136 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “The use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies for humanitarian assistance and for monitoring and management in emergency and disaster situations, including health-related emergencies, for early warning, prevention, mitigation and relief”;
- g) Resolution 202 (Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Using information and communication technologies to break the chain of health-related emergencies such as Ebola virus transmission”;
- h) Subparagraph ‘c’ of paragraph 20 of WSIS Action Line C7 (Electronic Environmental Protection) of the Geneva Plan of Action, which calls for the establishment of “*monitoring systems, using ICTs, to forecast and monitor the impact of natural and man-made disasters, particularly in developing countries, LDCs and small economies*”,

bearing in mind

- a) the importance of telecommunication/ information and communication technologies (ICT) networks, and their resiliency and scalability, in face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their role in helping get more people online in this time of crisis, as well as, the gaps and needs for further developing connectivity;
- b) the significant potential of telecommunication/ICT services and technologies and new and emerging technologies, such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data, OTTs, that facilitate telecommunications/ICTs, can improve the response to emergencies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other pandemics and epidemics and improving the effectiveness of their prevention and mitigation;
- c) the tragic events around the world related to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly show the need to expand affordable access to high-quality, sustainable and inclusive telecommunications/ICTs;
- d) the importance of access to relevant information about pandemics and epidemics to assist public safety, and support the work of health and disaster relief agencies and organizations;
- e) the need to promote digital inclusion, to ensure that everyone has access to telecommunications/ICTs and to maintain continuity of everyday social, educational and economic interactions and leaving no one excluded by using telecommunications/ICTs;

- f) affordable and effective telecommunications/ICTs are needed to minimize risks to human life and health, meet the urgent needs of the population for information and communication, support humanitarian assistance, and support economic responses for sustainable and inclusive recovery;
- g) the need to foster digital literacy and skills for all regardless of their age, gender, ability or location to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in and to support the continuity of information society provided by telecommunications/ICTs,

recognising

- a) that substantial digital divides exist within and among countries and regions, and that many regions lack affordable access to telecommunications/ICTs;
- b) the critical role that governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and other stakeholders play in enabling affordable connectivity for all and the benefits of stakeholders working collaboratively together to this end;
- c) that relevant international organizations play a key role in convening stakeholders, supporting and facilitating sharing of best practices for the development of affordable connectivity and supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts;
- d) that ITU, as the UN specialized agency for telecommunications/ICTs, plays a leading role in the implementation of relevant WSIS action lines and their outcomes and, through them, the achievement of the SDGs;
- e) the ongoing work in ITU related to new and emerging technologies that facilitate telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, ITU recommendations, particularly those that promote efficient use of telecommunication/ICT systems and technologies, as well as other relevant best practices, which may support response and recovery efforts;
- f) the ITU's efforts to gather best practices on how governments and stakeholders worked collaboratively to ensure connectivity during COVID-19 and how these lessons can be applied both to future pandemics or future efforts to promote connectivity and digital inclusion;
- g) the ITU's initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic brought together stakeholders including ITU Members, partners and several UN agencies in areas as diverse and critical as resiliency, accessibility, e-education, digital skills and digital cooperation, including:
 - i) the creation of the Global Network Resiliency Platform (#REG4COVID);
 - ii) the launch of new guidelines on emergency telecommunications, child online protection, and on making digital information, services and products accessible to all people;
 - iii) strengthening of partnerships such as between ITU and WHO, the ITU-UNICEF GIGA initiative to connect every school to the Internet, or the ITU-ILO initiative to boost decent jobs and enhance digital skills for the youth in Africa's digital economy;
 - iv) webinar series on Digital Cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic,

is of the view

expanding affordable access and connectivity to telecommunications/ICTs and new and emerging digital technologies, and advancing other related aspects such as digital inclusion and skills, will continue to play a critical role in helping to mitigate and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as future pandemics and epidemics,

invites Member States

1. to cooperate and offer assistance and support activities related to the use of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs services and technologies by citizens, organizations, and, if possible, other countries, especially developing countries³, and to support, in collaboration with WHO and other UN organizations and stakeholders, sectors related to telecommunications/ICTs in order to help mitigate

³ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

the effects of COVID-19 as well as future pandemics and epidemics and support the provision of humanitarian assistance and health services;

2. to consider how stakeholders, including telecommunications/ICTs providers, may contribute to supporting, if possible, jobs, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and to continue educational processes and initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, and mitigating its adverse social and economic consequences;

3. to assist in the implementation of projects and programs, including in the international arena, that enable deployment and use of telecommunications/ICTs as a support tool in responding to the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic;

4. to consider appropriate actions in the telecommunications/ICTs sector aimed at reducing the severity and number of emergency situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and aimed at alleviating its consequences, such as providing local communities with connectivity and information, especially in local languages, to help preserve human life;

5. to take an active role in developing and disseminating standards, guidelines and best practices in cooperation with other stakeholders for the use of telecommunications/ICTs in response to the COVID-19 and future pandemics;

6. to identify and share best practices, lessons learned, and effective measures, particularly in the areas noted in *invites Member States 1-5* above, for possible use in response to and preparation for potential future pandemics and epidemics,

invites the Secretary-General

to continue to reinforce the ITU's efforts, within its remit and in partnership with the WHO and other agencies and organisations, in collaboration with stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of telecommunication/ICT networks and services to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and increase pandemic preparedness and response.
