

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 connectivity 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 towards the achievement of 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 connectivity 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 connectivity 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 implementation of national digital strategies and 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;

8 to consult with relevant 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,

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 locally based entrepreneurship in the provision of complementary connectivity solutions;
- 8 to encourage all stakeholders to develop applications and services integrating new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to address diverse population needs;
- 9 to facilitate public-private investment by promoting closer cooperation between education and research centres and the private sector in emerging areas;
- 10 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.
