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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 Fourth meeting – Virtual meeting, February 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document IEG-WTPF-21-4/2-E** |
| **18 November 2020** |
| **English only** |
| **United Kingdom** | |
| DRAFT OPINION ON MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 | |

The United Kingdom is pleased to submit this contribution to the fourth meeting of the Informal Group of Experts.

We welcome the proposal submitted by the Russian Federation for the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) to adopt a draft Opinion on mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development in the context of helping to eliminate and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([IEG-WTPF-21-3/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-WTPF21IEG3-C-0008/en)). The pandemic has shown the important role that telecommunications/ICTs play in emergency situations and demonstrated why promoting affordable connectivity must be a critical priority for the ITU and the global community.

We would propose some amendments to the draft Opinion (attached at Annex A), which we believe will strengthen the text, and we look forward to discussing this at the next meeting.

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**ANNEX A**

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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 Third meeting (virtual), 14-16 September 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document IEG-WTPF-21-3/8** |
|  | **28 July 2020** |
|  | **English only** |
| **Contribution submitted by the Russian Federation** | |
| possible DRAFT OPINIONS for wtpf-21 | |

**OPINION X –** **Mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development in the context of helping to eliminate and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic**

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

*Recalling*

a) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/270 on global solidarity in the fight against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which calls on the United Nations system to work with all relevant actors to mobilize a coordinated global effort in response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial consequences for all countries;

b) Sustainable Development Goal 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, as well as SDG 9 “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation” and SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable» the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

c) Article 40 of the ITU Constitution on the priority of telecommunications related to the safety of human life;

d) Chapter VII of the ITU Radio Regulations for distress and safety communications and Article 5 of the International Telecommunication Regulations on the safety of human life and telecommunication priorities;

e) Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) Resolution 136 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) 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;

f) Plenipotentiary Conference Resolution 202 (Busan, 2014) on using information and communication technologies to break the chain of health-related emergencies such as Ebola virus transmission;

g) Subparagraph “c)” of paragraph 20 of Action Line C7 (Electronic Environmental Protection) of the Geneva Plan of Action, which calls for the establishment of ICT-based monitoring systems for forecasting and monitoring the impact of natural and man-made disasters, especially in developing countries;

*bearing in mind*

*a)* the significant potential of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs in improving the response to emergencies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and improving the effectiveness of their prevention and mitigation;

*b)* the tragic events around the world related to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly show the need for a high-quality communications infrastructure

c) the need for collection and dissemination of relevant information to assist public safety and support the work of health and disaster relief agencies

d) the need to promote affordable connectivity to ensure that everyone has access to telecommunications/ICTS and to the continuity of everyday social and economic processes provided by telecommunications / ICTs;

c) the need to minimize risks to human life and health and the need to meet the urgent needs of the population for information and communication, which requires affordable access to effective telecommunication/ICT systems necessary to ensure effective and appropriate humanitarian assistance, as well as measures to mitigate social consequences and economic response measures for sustainable and inclusive recovery;

*recognizing*

*a)* the important leading roles of governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and other stakeholders in enabling affordable connectivity for all and the need for all stakeholders to work collaboratively together to this end

b) the important leading roles of international organisations in offering support and best practice for the development of affordable connectivity and supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts

c) the important leading roles of the ITU, as the UN specialized agency for telecommunications/ICTs, in the implementation of WSIS and achieving the SDGs;

*b)* the ongoing work in ITU, including ITU study groups, related to mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and trends for sustainable development, and a wide range of ITU standards, ensuring the efficient use of telecommunication/ICT systems and applications for solving various social, economic and production tasks, as well as other relevant best practices;

*c)* ITU's already launched initiatives to defeat COVID-19, including with other UN organizations and the private sector, including but not limited to the Global Network Resiliency Platform (#REG4COVID) and webinar series on Digital Cooperation during COVID19 and beyond,

*in of the view that*

affordable access to telecommunications/ICTs plays a critical role in helping to eliminate and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

*invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders*

1to cooperate and offer all possible assistance and support to citizens, organizations, and, if possible, other countries, especially developing countries, in the provision of humanitarian assistance and health services and support for sectors related to telecommunications/ICTs, including for disease tracking, response, and public warning on measures taken, ensuring conditions for preserving, if possible, jobs, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and continuing the educational process during a pandemic and mitigating its adverse social, economic and financial consequences;

2 to assist in the implementation of international, regional, subregional, multilateral and bilateral projects and programs that serve the interests of using telecommunications / ICTs as a support tool in responding to the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic, in order to break the chain of emergency situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to facilitate the elimination of its consequences, including providing local communities with infrastructure and information, especially in local languages, to help preserve human life;

3 to take an active role in developing and disseminating standards, guidelines and best practices for the use of telecommunications / ICTs in emergencies and disasters caused by epidemics and pandemics.