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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21Fourth meeting – Virtual meeting, 1-2 February 2021** |  |
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| **23 December 2020** |
| **English only** |
| **Contribution from the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** |
| DRAFT OPINION – 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 Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are pleased to submit this contribution to the fourth meeting of Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21.

We welcome the proposal submitted by the United Kingdom ([IEG-WTPF-21-4/2-E](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/21/wtpf21ieg4/c/S21-WTPF21IEG4-C-0002%21%21MSW-E.docx)) on amendments to the 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)).

Expressing our gratitude to the will of the United Kingdom to strengthen the initial text, we submit revised 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 (Annex A), which includes the majority of the proposals submitted by the United Kingdom, as well as some other updates.

We look forward to discussing the revised draft opinion at the fourth meeting of IEG-WTPF-21.

**Annex A**

**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) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/306 on comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which recognizes that substantial digital divides and data inequalities exist within and among countries and regions, and between developed and all developing countries, and that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies, and calls for intensified international cooperation and solidarity to contain, mitigate and overcome the pandemic and its consequences through responses that are people-centred, gender-responsive, with full respect for human rights, multidimensional, coordinated, inclusive, innovative, swift and decisive at all levels, including by supporting the exchange of information, scientific knowledge and best practices through, inter alia, the development of new interoperable data tools and the strengthening of platforms to inform mitigation and response actions and continuously monitor the impact of the pandemic, especially to assist people in vulnerable situations and the poorest and most vulnerable countries, to build a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient future and to get back on track to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

c) 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;

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

e) 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;

f) Resolution 136 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of 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 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 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 maintain the continuity of everyday social and economic processes leaving no one excluded from them 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 the effective functioning of telecommunication/ICT systems and affordable access to them 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)* that substantial digital divides and data inequalities exist within and among countries and regions, and between developed and all developing countries, and that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies as stated in UNGA Resolution 74/306;

*b)* 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;

*c)* 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;

*d)* the important leading roles of the ITU, as the UN specialized agency for Telecommunication/ICT, in the implementation of WSIS Action Lines and achieving the SDGs;

*e)* the ongoing work in ITU, including ITU study groups, related to new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and trends, 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;

*f)* 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

*encourage Member States, Sector Members and other parties concerned*

to mobilize a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences and to accelerate the catalytic role that digital technologies play in reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, health, communication, commerce and business continuity and to take concerted action to further digital governance and economy, scientific research, emerging technologies and new data sources and to build resilient, inclusive and integrated data and statistical systems, under the leadership of national statistical offices, that can respond to the increased and urgent data demands in times of disaster and ensure a path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

*and invite them*

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;

3 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;

4 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.

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