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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 Sixth meeting – Virtual meeting, 24, 27, 28 September 2021** |  |
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| Contribution submitted by Canada  DRAFT OPINION 2 ON CONNECTIVITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | |
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Following the informal meetings held in July 2021, Canada offers the following text on draft Opinion 2 focusing on connectivity for sustainable development while taking into account the importance of building trust and confidence in the use of telecommunications/ICTs as an element to achieve equitable, universal and affordable connectivity. Some sections remain in brackets pending further discussion and agreement on the use of particular terminologies.

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) Resolution 137 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on next-generation network deployment in developing countries;

c) Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT;

d) Resolution 203 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on connectivity to broadband networks;

*recognizing*

a) that new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs ecosystems, including next generation wireless connectivity such as 5G, will underpin the digital economy of the future and enable advances in technologies and services including AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs;

b) 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;

c) 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;

d) that in the context of multistakeholder approach, stakeholders and individual users must be aware of relevant cybersecurity risks and preventive measures and take steps to enhance security and build confidence in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, including those that apply to [new and emerging digital technologies [that support] [pertaining to] [relevant to] telecommunications/ICTs];

e) that these new and emerging digital technologies [that support] [pertaining to] [relevant to] telecommunications/ICTs], driven by innovation, are rapidly evolving, bringing new opportunities and challenges, including those related to building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs and such technologies in particular, and stakeholders need to address both the opportunities and the challenges;]

f) 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, any obstacles in access to and use by women and girls will affect prosperity and limit social and sustainable economic development;

g) that policymakers can help connect the unconnected by creating an enabling policy environment that encourages and supports private sector investment and innovation;

*reaffirming*

reaffirming [the importance of communication and access to means of communication for everyone;]

*welcoming*

the affirmation by the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation that every person has safe and affordable access to the Internet by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

*is of the view*

a) 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;

b) 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) [investing in digital infrastructure that can deliver reusable digital services at scale with a greater return on investment;]

vi) 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;

vii) ensuring that access to network connectivity, including for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, are fully incorporated into country economic and social development plans and strategies, and is seen as central to a country’s ongoing economic and social development;

c) that all stakeholders should work to strengthen trust in [new and emerging digital technologies [that support] [pertaining to] [relevant to] telecommunications/ICTs], including through building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, and that particular attention should be paid to ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations, including women and children, as well as persons with disabilities and special needs, [and marginalized groups];

*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[, on commercial terms], 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, in particular [Action Lines 5 and 7], and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

2. [to consider policies to ensure that applications benefit 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, in order to strengthen ubiquitous Internet connectivity, which will mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs];

4. [to continue to share their own experiences on 5G, connectivity, and bridging the digital divide to the ongoing discussions at the ITU on promoting sustainable development];

5. to work collaboratively and build confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs especially in the application of [new and emerging digital technologies [that support] [pertaining to] [relevant to] telecommunications/ICTs],

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

*invites the Secretary-General*

[to continue to strengthen ITU efforts to promote universal, affordable and trusted connectivity through new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development.]

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