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| PROPOSALS ON TERMINOLOGY |

16 November 2021

# **Sixth Draft of the 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)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-002-E.pdf), the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU has now 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)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-002-E.pdf)).

1.1.3 By [Decision 611](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0081/en) (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[[1]](#footnote-1), 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)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-002-E.pdf)).

1.1.5 All information relating to WTPF-21 is posted on [www.itu.int/wtpf](https://www.itu.int/en/wtpf-21/Pages/default.aspx).

**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)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-002-E.pdf)). 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](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0128/en) (Rev. Council 2020) and referred to in para 1.1.3 above.

1.2.2 In accordance with [Decision 611](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0081/en) of ITU Council 2019 (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](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0128/en) (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**

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| **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 (September 2019 during the CWG cluster)** | 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 (January/February 2020 during the CWG cluster)** | 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 2nd IEG meeting and including outlines of draft Opinions.  This draft will also be made available online for open public consultations |
| **15 June, 2020** | Deadline for receipt of comments on the Third Draft, and for contribution on possible draft Opinions  Deadline for inputs from the open public consultations |
| **3rd IEG Meeting (September 2020 during the CWG cluster)** | 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 (February 2021 during the CWG cluster)** | 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** | 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.  This draft will also be made available online for open public consultations. |
| **1 May, 2021** | Deadline for receipt of comments on the Fifth Draft, including the possible draft Opinions.  Deadline for receipt of comments from the open public consultation. |
| **5th IEG Virtual Meeting (Mid-May, 2021 close to the WSIS Forum 2021 duration)** | 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](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0081/en) (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 policy-making 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.

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 policy-makers 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 polices 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 policy-makers 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?

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

2.7.8 How can policy-makers 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](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0081/en) (Rev. Council 2020) lists some themes for consideration as indicated below.

**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, policy-makers 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:

1. How can the development and deployment of IoT promote sustainable development?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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 policy-makers 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, policy-makers 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?

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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)