|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Council Working Group on WSIS and SDG38th meeting, 19-20 January 2022** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document CWG-WSIS&SDG-38/11-E** |
| **17 December 2021** |
| **English only** |
| Contribution by the Secretariat |
| WSIS ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COVID-19 RESPONSE |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary**This document highlights the WSIS activities related to COVID-19 response.**Action required**Members are invited to **note** the information provided in the document. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**Reference**<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2021/Agenda> <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2022/Home/WSISTalkX> [www.wsis.org/stocktaking](http://www.wsis.org/stocktaking) <https://www.itu.int/en/Pages/covid-19.aspx> |

**WSIS ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COVID-19 RESPONSE**

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for the WSIS Forum to transform and respond, with digitalisation as a key enabler. As part of the effort, WSIS has been actively engaged in promoting the use of ICTs to support achieving the SDGs as well as to respond to such global crises as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated the power and promise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for continued functioning of societies. In collaboration and at the request of Stakeholders, WSIS secretariat initiated some initiatives and activities to highlight the full power of ICTs to respond to and recover from COVID-19 pandemic.

**WSIS TalkX and WSIS Forum**

Since April 2020, at the request of WSIS stakeholders, the WSIS Team hosted regular virtual WSIS TalkX for the WSIS Stakeholders to interact, connect and collaborate. Following the highly appreciated weekly sessions at the beginning of this year, the WSIS Forum 2021 has featured [one hundred COVID19-related sessions](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2021/Agenda#agenda) and this global response of the WSIS community has proven the need to for continuous discussion on challenges the pandemic has put on societies and economies, while highlighting ICT tools as indispensable to continue, recover, and enhance the digital transformation in all segments of life.

The fourth season of the inspirational WSIS TalkX have started in September 2021, with six new episodes conducted with ITU and other WSIS stakeholders, all discussing the impact of COVID-19 and ways to empower our actions with the efficient use of technologies. New series of WSIS TalkX will continue to gather new insights on how ICTs are combating the pandemic, and invite the community to take active participation and gain by joining discussions. The sessions will be adapted to podcasts and made available to listen and download at [WSIS TalkX Podcast](https://wsistalkx.buzzsprout.com/861820).

**WSIS Stocktaking**

As a part of the WSIS Stocktaking efforts to promote the innovative use of ICTs, the Coronavirus Response - ICT Case Repository collected more than 500 projects and activities dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Second edition of the special ICT Case Repository: The Coronavirus Response is now available here: <http://www.itu.int/go/wsis2020outcomes> The WSIS Stocktaking continues to collect ICT projects on a year-around basis, and we invite all stakeholders to continue contributing to this important repository.

**WSIS Action Lines**

Implementation of the WSIS Action Lines have been notably recognized in advancing the SDGs, and are now also being identified as important in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, all activities at the WSIS Forum 2020 and 2021, WSIS Stocktaking 2020 and 2021, have been carefully reviewed for linkages between the WSIS Action Lines, SDGs, and the data on COVID-19 was collected from the stakeholders during the submission phases for further analysis and reporting. Stakeholders have been suggesting that an effective implementation of the WSIS Action Lines can help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, and help combat the COVID-19 crises. To that end, the secretariat continues to collect information, which reflect the linkages between implementation of WSIS Action Lines and COVID-19 response, through the WSIS Forum 2022 OCP and WSIS Stocktaking 2022.

**ITU’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Activities**

Now more than ever, the world needs to be able to rely on ICTs and ITU's leadership in promoting universal, secure, reliable and affordable connectivity. ITU is helping countries to fully utilize digital technologies to respond to and recover from COVID-19, and to build preparedness for similar future global emergencies.

The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the urgent need for the global digital cooperation. It is now more urgent than ever that we leverage ICTs to connect everyone everywhere and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Cooperation among ITU Members and partners, including sister UN agencies, is central to ITU’s multi-stakeholder response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a clear need to increase digital cooperation, across borders and sectors, and accelerate the development of digital societies.

Consult the list of its COVID-19 initiatives, activities and partnerships [here](https://www.itu.int/en/Pages/covid-19.aspx) and read core COVID-19 messages [here](https://www.itu.int/en/SiteAssets/COVID-19/ITU-COVID-19-High-Level-Messages.pdf).

[Listen](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/podcasts.aspx) to ITU podcasts on how COVID-19 has affected the telecom sector, and the economy and society at large, and [watch](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/videos.aspx) the latest ITU videos on the socio-economic effects of COVID-19.

COVID-19 crisis has not only highlighted the critical role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for continued functioning of societies but has also brought to the fore the startling digital inequalities between and within countries. Bound by the powerful belief that technology can be a source of good for everyone, ITU Members have stepped up and engaged in activities that have proven essential in saving lives and keeping economies going.

It is increasingly clear that COVID-19 has been a uniquely powerful gamechanger, with digital connectivity now at the top of every nation’s agenda. The crisis has acted as both catalyst, upending legacy processes and effecting cultural change, and accelerator, driving online trends that may otherwise have taken a decade to emerge. There is also clear recognition of a greater need for cooperation and collaboration at regional and global level, as long advocated by ITU. ICTs have an enormous role to play in helping society adapt to the dislocations caused by the pandemic.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_