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| UPDATES ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ITU/UNESCO BROADBAND COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | |
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| **Summary**  This document highlights the work of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development in 2021, including publications released, the advocacy work and focus areas for 2022.  **Action required**  Members are requested to note the information about the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, including the recently published reports.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**   * The State of Broadband Report: <https://broadbandcommission.org/report-type/state-of-broadband-report/> * Working Group research and outcomes: <https://broadbandcommission.org/working-groups/> * 7 Advocacy Targets 2025: Connecting the Other Half <https://broadbandcommission.org/broadband-targets/> * Universal Connectivity Manifesto 2020 <https://broadbandcommission.org/manifesto/> * The Commission at a Glance: <https://broadbandcommission.org/how-we-operate/> |

**UPDATES ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ITU/UNESCO BROADBAND COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2021**

The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 2010 by ITU and UNESCO with the aim of boosting the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda and expanding broadband access in every country as key to accelerating progress towards national and international development targets. Led by H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Mr Carlos Slim Helù of Mexico, it is co-chaired by ITU’s Secretary-General, Mr Houlin Zhao, and UNESCO Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay. It comprises over 50 Commissioners who represent a cross-cutting group of top CEO and industry leaders, senior policymakers and government representatives, and experts from international agencies, academia and organizations concerned with development.

**The Advocacy**

The Commission acts as a UN advocacy engine for the implementation of the UNSG’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and leverages the strength of its membership and collective expertise to advocate for meaningful, safe, secure, and sustainable broadband communications services that are reflective of human and children’s rights. Since 2010, more than 30 Working Groups on thematic areas from health to education were established and recommendations were made. The Commission has also been instrumental in launching a number of global initiatives (EQUALS, Giga, etc.).

The Commission launched in 2020, the *Universal Connectivity Manifesto*, recognizing **affordable universal connectivity as a foundational element for meeting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.** The Manifesto outlines three key steps for achieving these goals: 1) Establishing a baseline for universal digital connectivity., 2) Identifying and supporting public-private financing of universal broadband. 3) Advocating for enabling ICT regulatory environments, capacity building & online safety.

**The State of Broadband Annual Report**

Every year, the Commission releases its flagship report, the **State of Broadband Report.** – This collaborative outcome of the Commission details the current state of play of broadband markets, lessons learned from the pandemic, progress on meeting the Broadband Commission’s 2025 targets, and policy recommendations. The 2021 edition of the report called for a concerted, people-centred approach to achieving universal connectivity to close the world’s persistent divide, highlighting also the need for additional investments to advance progress towards universal access.

**The Broadband Commission Working Groups**

Three Working Groups (WG) concluded their work and published their outcomes in 2021. The **WG on Digital Learning** introduced factors to make hybrid learning a viable option for students, requiring: deliberate planning, informed decision-making and substantial investment.

The **WG on 21st Century Financing Models**, with its Executive Summary and WG Report, presented recommendations for universal connectivity including:

* widening the base of contributors;
* earmarking proceeds from ICT sector participants;
* reforming Universal Service and Access Funds;
* creating an international fund.

The **WG on Epidemic Management**, in its Executive Summary, provided status of the COVID-19 outbreak, the need for a framework for responding to future pandemics and country case studies.

Newly launched Working Groups will tackle in the coming year the following issues: Virtual Health and Care; Smartphone Access; AI Capacity Building; Data for Learning.

**The Broadband Commission’s recommendations in Action**

ITU, as the UN specialized agency for ICTs, was instrumental in the establishment of the Broadband Commission just over a decade ago and stay at the helm of Commission with the ITU Secretary-General role as the Co-Vice Chair. The recommendations of the Commission as well as its **7 Broadband Advocacy Targets** 2025 have been reflected in ITU’s work, activities, and conferences throughout the ITU sectors.

The ITU strategic framework includingITU Connect 2030 Agenda and ITU Strategic Plan aligns with priorities set by the Commission.

Of the Commission’s 7 Advocacy Targets, ITU is monitoring the ones related to policy, connectivity, affordability, and gender digital divide in its publications including the ITU Facts and Figures.

In terms of connectivity, new data released by ITU (Facts and Figures 2021) show that 4.9 billion people used the internet in 2021. In terms of affordability 39 of the 43 LDCs are still far from reaching the Commission’s target of 2% of monthly GNI for an entry-level broadband package. On the policy side, more than 160 countries adopted some kind of national broadband strategy. Several countries are in the process of adopting one and others having plans that have expired and or moving towards more specific strategies such as ones addressing AI or IoT. This is an increase from 102 countries in 2010.

The Broadband Commission has issued a number of calls to action and high-level Open Letters directed at Heads of State, key G20 decision-makers, the United Nations and the ITU Member States (i.e. Plenipotentiary Conference).

The Commission has also been instrumental in launching global initiatives with the ITU’s leadership role such as:

1) “EQUALS”, the ITU, ITC, GSMA and UN Women Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age;

2) “GIGA” the ITU and UNICEF Global Initiative to Connect Every School to Internet by 2030

3) Child Online Safety Universal Declaration featuring ITU Child Online Protection Guidelines

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