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| **Council Working Group on WSIS and SDG 38th meeting, 19-20 January 2022** |  |
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| ICT-related discussions and outcomes of 76th UNGA | |

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| **Summary**  This report summarizes the ICT-related discussions and outcomes of 76th UNGA.  **Action required**  This report is transmitted to the Council Working Group WSIS & SDGs for information.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References** |

1. **ICT-related discussions**
   1. **UNGA 76th Session General Debate**

At the opening of the Annual General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) highlighted that we are at a critical inflection point with a choice between breakdown and breakthrough. He spoke about 6 great divides or grand canyons that urgently need to be tackled, among these is the digital divide.[[1]](#footnote-2) The UNSG also referred to his Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, as well as concerns about the growing reach of digital platforms, data abuse, human rights impacts of digital technologies, cyber-attacks, and autonomous weapons. As the path forward, the UNSG positioned his Our Common Agenda report and its 90 proposals, which include among other things, a call for a Global Digital Compact and a Summit of the Future in 2023 with a possible digital track. Many of the General Debate statements presented by Heads of State and Government also made reference to digital policy issues, such as: cybersecurity, cybercrime, violent extremism online, fake news and social media abuse, emerging technologies, digital taxation, digital economy, the digital divide, online education, access to data, and the UNSG’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. The digital divide was the most frequently mentioned digital topic, followed by cybersecurity, the digital economy and fake news spread through social media. ITU’s analysis of the digital content of the General Debate statements is available [here.](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/rui_wan_itu_int/EdAsw52_rRREqa4k63l7MKcBQwfYzA6pzn-_oI4aNoxWgw?e=L7j933)

* 1. **UNGA agenda items on ICTs**

Many UNGA resolutions now contain provisions referencing digital issues, such as the importance of addressing digital divides, digital skills and the potential of ICTs for making progress on the SDGs. In addition, a growing number of UNGA resolutions have ICTs as their focus. For example, in August in the 75th Session, the UNGA adopted the latest resolution on the “Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets”[[2]](#footnote-3). ICT themes are also being addressed in the First Committee[[3]](#footnote-4) and Third Committee[[4]](#footnote-5). ITU followed two agenda items in the Second Committee (2nd Committee): Agenda item 17. Information and communications technologies for sustainable development, and Agenda item 22. Globalization and interdependence: (a) Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development. In statements delivered under Agenda item 17, many UN Member States emphasized the need to bridge the digital divide, highlighting how the pandemic has shown the importance of meaningful Internet connectivity for livelihoods, employment, health and social participation. They also emphasized the need for cooperation and adopting a coordinated approach in addressing the digital divide, improving Internet access and boosting connectivity for sustainable development. ITU’s own statement stressed that leaving no one behind means leaving no one offline, the need for reliable and affordable access to technology and the importance of empowering people with digital skills. ITU’s statement also highlighted the value of cooperation and collaboration to connect the unconnected (the full text of ITU’s statement is available [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11ZQNsvwTfBX8zxRCfzwIda5XJrSI4KlS/view?usp=sharing)).

**2. ICT-related Outcomes**

**2.1 ICT4SD and STI4SD Resolutions**

The resolution “[Information and communications technologies for sustainable development](https://undocs.org/en/A/C.2/76/L.56)”[[5]](#footnote-6), which was co-facilitated by Mexico and Singapore, and the resolution “[Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development](https://undocs.org/en/A/C.2/76/L.60)”[[6]](#footnote-7), which was co-facilitated by Indonesia and Mexico, were both negotiated successfully within informals of the UNGA 2nd Committee and adopted by the 2nd Committee on 23 November. Due to the pandemic, 2nd Committee modalities put the focus on mostly technical updates again this year. Key themes addressed in the ICT for SD resolution include, among other things, recognition of the need to harness the potential of ICTs for acceleration of the SDGs; recognition that lack of access to affordable and reliable technologies and services remains a critical challenge in many developing countries; commitment to bridging digital and knowledge divides and urging all relevant stakeholders to play their part; that all efforts should be deployed to reduce the price of ICTs and broadband access; encouragement of cooperation between and among stakeholders; importance of expanding participation of all countries in the digital economy; encouragement to take up capacity building opportunities provided by the UN System; maximizing development gains from e-commerce; the call for further actions, including investment, to improve broadband access and connectivity; the role that small and non-profit community operators can play in broadband connectivity in rural and remote areas; the pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in engaging with and accessing new technologies; the critical importance of private sector investment in ICT infrastructure, content and services; the important role of ICTs for attaining the SDGs and for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; taking note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda” to improve digital cooperation.

Key ICT themes addressed in the STI for SD resolution include, among other things: the need to adopt STI strategies as integral elements of national sustainable development plans and strengthen knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms and collaboration; the importance of addressing the gap in capabilities across and between countries, sectors and segments of society so all can adapt and benefit from technological changes; creation of a conducive environment that attracts and supports private investment, entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility; encouragement to Member States to invest in research and development for environmentally sound technologies and promote the involvement of business and financial sectors in developing them; encourages all stakeholders to prepare for existing and future opportunities and challenges presented by technological change; encouragement to Member States to promote digital inclusion and literacy and to consider incorporating digital competencies into the education system; the importance of women and girls in STI and of addressing barriers to their equal access; the importance of facilitating access to and sharing accessible and assistive technologies; critical role of STI in building resilience to, combating and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic; the need to effectively harness technology to bridge the digital divides within countries and between developed and developing countries; enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries to generate the use of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data; the importance of better coordination and coherence among existing mechanisms; support for technical and scientific cooperation and North-South, South-South, triangular, regional and international cooperation on access to STI and knowledge-sharing.

Alongside recognition of the work and activities of other UN entities and other UN forums such as IGF, STI Forum and CSTD in these resolutions, ITU’s work and activities are reflected, including ITU statistics on digital divides, WSIS and WSIS Forum, Connect 2030, Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, International Girls in ICT Day, EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, and WTDC 2022.

**3. ITU activities and contributions in UNGA 76th Session**

**3.1 Participation by ITU Elected Officials and ITU co-hosted events**

ITU Elected Officials spoke at UNGA High Level Week events, including the SDG Moment event (which included a segment on connectivity), and at ITU hosted/co-hosted side events including the annual Broadband Commission meeting, a Partner2Connect side event, a side event on Innovating against food loss and waste with ICT for the Food Systems Summit / International Day of Food Waste and Loss. ITU also partnered on a side event hosted by the World Benchmarking Alliance on digital inclusion. ITU staff also followed many other UNGA events and side-events and reported to ITU Headquarters on highlights and key takeaways from the various sessions, see details [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KCh_RuJBkuvFzH0AgRgS1cHSWlqH0YZJ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=117766948601484971000&rtpof=true&sd=true).

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1. The other great divides the UNSG mentioned were peace, climate, the gap between rich and poor, gender, and generations (youth). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [A/RES/75/316](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/316) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See e.g. the agenda item entitled “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See e.g. the agenda item entitled “Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes.” The Third Committee held a virtual informal meeting on this jointly with other agenda items. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://undocs.org/en/A/C.2/76/L.56> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. https://undocs.org/en/A/C.2/76/L.60 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)