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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C24/75-E** |
| **20 May 2024** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Contribution by France, Norway, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| THEME FOR WTPF |
| **Purpose**Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference resolves to hold the world telecommunication/ICT policy forum (WTPF) and instructs the ITU Council to:1. decide on the duration, date, venue, agenda and themes of any future WTPF;2. adopt a procedure for preparation of the report by the Secretary-General to WTPF.The Plenipotentiary Conference also instructed the Council to schedule a WTPF in 2026. Contribution C24/5 proposes a timeline for WTPF-26 and invites Council to provide guidance on this. **Action required by the Council**We propose that Council should **adopt** the timeline proposed in C24/5 and **decide** on the follow theme for WTPF-26:**“Policies for telecommunications/ICTs to achieve net zero and tackle environmental challenges”.****References**1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [*Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report*](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf) (2023)
2. BEREC, [*Environmental impact of electronic communications*](https://www.berec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/document_register_store/2022/3/BoR%20%2822%29%2034_External%20Sustainability%20Study%20on%20Environmental%20impact%20of%20EC.pdf) (2022), 2
3. ITU,[*UN, World Economic Forum and Partners Come Together to Address E-Waste Challenges*](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/2019-PR01.aspx) (2019)
4. GSMA, [*The Enablement Effect*](https://www.gsma.com/betterfuture/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/GSMA_Enablement_Effect.pdf) (2019), 9
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The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has assessed that climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health and there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all (1).

Telecommunications/ICTs make a significant and growing contribution to emissions, and they consume growing quantities of finite resources. A 2022 BEREC report estimates that the sector contributes around 2-4% of global emissions (2) . UN agencies have estimated that in 2018 the global economy generated approximately 50 million tonnes of electronic and electrical waste (3). To reduce the environmental impact of ICTs, methodologies are being developed to understand their environmental footprint, identify common indicators and measures, and elaborate new practices promoting eco-design and sustainability.

Telecommunications/ICTs can be affected by climate change. Extreme weather events such as floods and heatwaves can lead to service outages with significant social and economic impacts. Governments, regulators and industry have a shared interest in developing policy and regulatory models, codes of practice, and other frameworks to support network resilience in the face of these challenges.

Policy makers must also harness the transformative role that telecommunications/ICTs can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change. With greater connectivity, sectors such as transport, energy, and manufacturing can digitally transform and reduce their emissions. The GSMA estimates this “enablement effect” enables savings of 10:1 (4). Telecoms services can also play life-saving roles in natural disasters and extreme weather.

Some work has been done on these issues in the ITU already. For example:

* ITU-D is studying ICTs and climate change and how ICTs can help monitor climate change.
* ITU-T’s Study Group 5 conducts studies on methodologies for evaluating ICT effects on climate change and publishing guidelines for using ICTs in an eco-friendly way.
* ITU-R has envisaged that IMT-2030 should be built on energy efficiency, low power consumption technologies, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and appropriate use of resources under the applicable model of circular economy.

These and other examples are encouraging, but the scale and urgency of the challenge requires more sustained, coordinated and innovative policy approaches. There is urgent work to do to address these issues in a comprehensive, joined-up way and to develop an ambitious and forward-looking policy agenda. As the CWG-FHR Resource Mobilisation group has discussed, such a scaling-up of ambition on Green Digital Action would fall outside the currently funded core activities of the Union.

WTPF-26 could provide a platform which would allow for a broader, future-focused discussion of the policy issues here, which do not always fit into the Sector structure. It could consider Opinions, for example, on topics such as:

* Policies to reduce the environmental impact of telecommunications/ICTs and support net zero.
* Policies to harness the potential of telecommunications/ICTS to monitor and mitigate the effects of climate change.
* Policies to promote resilience of telecommunications/ICTs to the effects of climate change.

The WTPF could convene governments, regulators, the private sector and other stakeholders to support an informed and fruitful discussion, taking into account a range of global experience and perspectives. It would support Member States to realise their digital transformation and net zero goals and it could also be an important input into climate change discussions.

Tackling environmental challenges is an urgent global priority. WTPF-26 can provide a critical platform to address the opportunities and challenges holistically, and to bring policymakers together to develop a shared vision and build a policy agenda for the future.

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