



**DECLARATION  
ON  
LEVERAGING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
TO SAVE LIVES**

The representatives of governments, international organizations, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ( ) met in , Freetown, Sierra Leone from 26 to 27 August 2015 for the *Regional Ministerial Consultative Meeting on Ebola: Leveraging Information and Communication Technology to Save Lives* to map out concrete strategies and adopt practical measures aimed at giving the use of telecommunications/ICT a central role in combating the spread of the Ebola virus and other diseases across the world.

The Regional Ministerial Meeting discussed policy, regulation, technology, and deployment of telecommunications systems to prepare, mitigate, and respond to diseases and epidemics such as the Ebola. The meeting comprised a Ministerial Round Table on country case studies, a stakeholder partnership session, and a working session on new approaches to using ICT for combatting the Ebola such as big data and Internet of Things (IoT).

The International Telecommunication Union presented for the first time a new project based on official sources that seeks to use big data for mitigation before, during and after the outbreak of such diseases as Ebola while safeguarding individual privacy. The project is based on a co-financed project between the International Telecommunication Union and the Government of Japan and initially involves Mobile Network Operators in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. The project will also include a component of Tele-Health soon to be launched by ITU.

We, participants at the *Regional Ministerial Meeting on Ebola: Leveraging Information and Communication Technology to Save Lives (Sierra Leone, 2015)*, thank the Government of Sierra Leone, Airtel Sierra Leone and other Operators, and the International Telecommunication Union and its entire Membership, for organizing this meeting and contributing to the ongoing project which will save human lives. We greatly appreciate the contributions made by all the Governments at this event who invaluable contributions. We, unanimously in the spirit of humanity and solidarity, endorse the outcomes of the Meeting

and uphold the 2014 ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 202 (Busan, 2014) on Using Information and Communication Technologies to break the chain of health-related emergencies such as Ebola virus transmission which focuses on the need to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enable the flow of information, in particular in local languages, to be used in health related emergencies so that life-saving information can be shared with local communities,

*declare that*

- a) While diseases outbreaks cannot be entirely prevented, ITU and partners through telecommunication/information and communication technologies (ICT) should help reduce their impact through monitoring, detection, and prediction of new virus outbreaks.
- b) The effort towards bridging the digital divide and the creation of a truly global information society should be closely linked with Telecommunication/ICTs for the dissemination of information to raise awareness on epidemics such as Ebola virus and other diseases.
- c) Effective disaster risk reduction through ICT including disease related, contributes to the post-2015 development agenda and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- d) Combating Climate Change through mitigation and adaptation should be of high priority in order to curb the emergence of new epidemics linked to climate change and global warming.
- e) Effective policies and regulations are essential in responding better to future epidemic outbreaks as well as reducing vulnerability. The regulatory regime has to be continuously reviewed, and where other barriers to the use of telecommunication resources for health disaster response and relief exist, these should be addressed. These barriers could include, but not limited to, regulations restricting the movement of telecommunications equipment and personnel, at both national and international levels, and regulations on the use of relevant frequency spectrum should be in accordance with the ITU Radio Regulations. It is important that while governments develop policies on health disaster management, that the use of telecommunications/ICT resources is at the core of such planning.
- f) Different technologies should be made available for emergency telecommunications and should be easily deployed in a timely manner when disasters strike. As much as possible the use of existing infrastructure, telecommunications/ICT systems, and frequencies allocated for emergencies should be optimized.
- g) Cooperation and coordination at international, regional and national levels is essential for effective use of telecommunications/ICT and alerting as well as disaster

response/relief as it maximizes the use of limited resources to control virus outbreaks and save lives. The cooperation should involve government authorities, United Nations Agencies, non-governmental organizations. The private sector especially ITU Sector Members play a very important role in this cooperation by contributing big data information and other resources for use by humanitarian teams.

- h) Remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems using satellites are invaluable sources of information for decision making as they provide information with data needed for a rapid response to epidemic outbreaks and threats.
  - i) Close cooperation between Ministries of Health and those of Information and Communication Technologies should be encouraged and enforced so as to optimize the use of modern technologies to save lives and applications such as telemedicine and Ebola-Info Sharing play an important role in this effort.
  - j) Collaboration between Government Regulatory Agencies, Mobile Network Operators, the International Telecommunication, and the World Health Organization be encouraged.
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