FINISHED COPY

ITU WSIS FORUM 2017

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
MODERATED HIGH-LEVEL POLICY SESSION 7
POPOV ROOM
13 JUNE 2017
1750

Services provided by:

Caption First, Inc.
P.O. Box 3066
Monument, CO 80132
1-877-825-5234
팕 719-481-9835
www.captionfirst.com

***

***

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Good afternoon. Welcome to the final closing Session Number 7 on Bridging Digital Divides. I ask our speakers to take their seats. Thank you. We have two speakers. Yes?

We will start, ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon. Apologies for the delay of the past sessions. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Habib Kammoun from academia, from the University of Sfax, Tunisia.

It is difficult to follow and be the last session of the day. I am honored to be here today and introduce the high level policy session, session number 7 which is focused on the bridging digital divides. One of the subjects that has been of great concern during the WSIS process.

I welcome to the session our Honorable speakers from Iran, from Uganda, Sierra Leone, Vietnam, Mexico, Moldova, as well as representatives from Arab and African Union for Digital Media, and 50 More Ventures.

Thank you for joining us. We want to thank our Honorable speakers for accepting to provide their statements here in this session that will be published tomorrow in the outcome document of the high level track.

So this session has both on site and remote participants. For those in the room, if you have questions, please you have the desk to submit your questions. For those participating remotely, we have an online Facilitator who will capture them. We will take questions submitted at the end of the session if we have time. If not, the WSIS Secretariat will take the questions and send them to the speakers.

So before starting, I would like to remind you our Honorable speakers, to please give your statements within three minutes, if possible.

I would like to begin with our first speaker, His Excellency, Minister of information and communication technology in Iran, Mr. Mahmoud Vaezi. You just had an election in your country where Mr. Rouhani was reelected. Please, tell us about your achievements in the ICT sector in the past four years, particularly in under the expansion of ICT infrastructure. Thank you.

>> MAHMOUD VAEZI: Thank you. I'm happy to briefly inform you of our achievement in the past four years. We now provide broadband services to close to 28,000 villages. The number of fixed lines in our country is more than 48 million. The number of active mobile subscribers exceeds 85 million. The number of broadband users is close to 44 million. With 34 millions use 3G and 4G mobile broadband.

To use international capacity of data services now exceeds one terabit per second. The domestic backbone IP capacity is close to ten terabits per second.

In addition, we have established seven IXPs nodes across the country. Recently we started to provide FTX connections to residential and business customers in metropolitan areas.

Besides we are moving fast on narrowing the digital gap by utilising bounds to expand ICT networks and services to less affluent and remote areas. In doing so, our aim is to introduce useful services in addition to providing broadband connectivity so as to empower residents by providing them with a wide range of application and information methods. Last year we created more than 100,000 ICT related jobs by actively

supporting startup R&D and innovation by way of providing grants and low interest loans.

In the past three years the ICT market size in Iran increased three fold. And we expect to achieve similar expansion in the next five years. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you for your brief effort. I was asked before going to the next question, sorry, I would like to announce that the interpreters will stop now at 5:45. So we have to conclude our session all in English. Sorry for that.

So for the second question, what would be your focus in the next four years?

>> MAHMOUD VAEZI: Well, thank you very much. Our policy has been improved the quality of services to diversify services and at the same time make them more affordable by promoting competition, partnership with the private sectors. And a tracking foreign investment to expand the reach to the remote and rural areas. To facilitate and actively support innovation. And to embrace advanced technology to improve efficiency in all aspects. All of the above are embodied in our national information networks which is being implemented to provide affordable broadband services to residents everywhere. Our policy is also to embrace, facilitate and encourage international cooperation in all matters related to the ICTs. We have actively participated in different international conferences, study groups, meeting and other fora.

And contributed to such meetings in a positive and concerted manner. We shall continue to do so in the future.

As we firmly believe that only by joining hands we will be able to make this world a better place, not only for us but for the generations to come.

I would like to use this opportunity to emphasize the importance of the joint R&D projects with the partners from abroad in developing new technologies, new applications and new services. This is an important tool of our policy. And we will promote such activities by giving priority in our future transactions to those who respond positively to this goal. There are many Iranian ICT related companies that are ready for cooperate at international level in all fields. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you so much for your thoughtful responses. It is a very impressive plan for the next years in Iran.

So with that I will now move to His Excellency the Minister of ICT and National Guidance in Uganda, Mr. Frank.

Thank you for joining us. Our question is: What steps has Uganda taken to achieve universal access and usage of ICT services?

>> FRANK TUMWEBAZE KAGYIGYI: Thank you, Chairman. A number of policy interventions have been designed and deployed, but most importantly our national IT plan involves roll-out of infrastructure. This infrastructure roll-out is both by the intervention of government as well as the private sector. Government has invested close to $100 million from its own revenues as well as from donors to put in place the national backbone infrastructure that connects all government installations both in the urban and rural areas. At the same time the telecommunication companies and Internet service providers have been licensed and they are also rolling out infrastructure and the alliances and conditions that require them to state their roll-out plans.

We have established, of course, just like you know, the universal service fund. In our case we call it the rural communication environment fund under the national regulator. And among other things it finances, we have equipped all laboratories and secondary schools all over the school starting with all government schools. Our school is located at the sub-country level, that's the rural setup. We believe when you have computers, you are enabling ICT literacy and, therefore, you are bridging the digital divide.

We continue to encourage with other complementary public services regarding infrastructure. You have heard about utility corridors. We are trying to make sure that technological infrastructure planning is integrated with the physical infrastructure planning. If you don't do that, you will be spending double work because technological work will involve spending on works and physical infrastructure. Coordinating the planning is very, very important.

We are encouraging infrastructure planning, like for us amongst telecommunications companies, such as one company is not delayed in terms of roll out by not having masses, we know that telecommunications companies must have a core of business. We encouraged the conditions that they share even when they are competing.

We have also in addition to giving computers to every school, we have been training ICT teachers, giving them the necessary skills such that they are able to teach ICT as a subject that can be examinable in the lower schools. That's part of the interventions we have implemented as Uganda. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you, Mr. Frank. In your opinion, what specific strategy do you believe will roll out infrastructure in an economic manner?

>> FRANK TUMWEBAZE KAGYIGYI: Two key policy guidelines are being looked at. This year we are launching what is called the ICT innovation fund. We believe that investment in ICT for it to give us dividends as a country, our children, our young people must benefit from it. How do they benefit from it? They benefit from it through innovation.

So we supporting local ICT innovators by putting up universal hubs, but linking them with other mentors, the multinational companies of this world, by a tracking seed capital for startups and at the same time making sure that the Intellectual Property rights of our people are protected we believe through innovation the digital divide will be mitigated.

Also importantly, we are trying to integrate all of our ICT policies into one document which we call the digital vision strategy or digital vision Uganda. That digital vision will be setting milestones for each sector to look at. If it is re, they will receive the digital milestones. We encourage the digital milestones. If each sector adopts and chooses to do its work through the digital lenses, then the entire country will adopt the digital work, the divide will be mitigated and the literacy levels will increase.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you very much. Impressive work done in Uganda. With that, I will now move to His Excellency the Deputy Minister of Information and Communications in Vietnam, Mr. Phan Tam. Thank you for joining us. So I would like to give you the first question is what are the main challenges of bridging the digital divide in the context of transforming into digital economy?

>> PHAN TAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For Vietnam, bridging the digital divide is more challenging in the broadband era and especially when we are all moving towards the digital economy.

Indeed in the past if our mission was mainly to ensure basic telephone services anywhere, any time, for anybody, and bridging the digital divide is just an improvement of the availability and affordability of telephone services. But nowadays the digital economy requires much more. Of course the availability and affordability of broadband structure is of primary importance, but the digital economy requires also data collection everywhere, meaning census everywhere, data generation everywhere.

So if the digital divide nowadays consists also of the right of access to data and information which, information, which are now the vital raw material for work in the digital economy.

More important, the digital economy requires high ICT skilled workforce. So we have to deal with a new dimension of digital divide that is the right of digital skills. The skill to create and to add value from big data. So from this perspective, we have to cope with the lack of data science capability and also to cope with the new generation of ICT platforms for data collection processing. In other words, we have to establish also data analytics everywhere and data service availability everywhere. These are new challenges in terms of bridging the digital divide in the broadband era and digital economy. That is my answer to your question.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you very much for your thoughtful response. So if possible to add another question, how broadband development could help bridging the digital divide? What is the role of the government in this case to foster close of the digital divide?

>> PHAN TAM: Okay, thank you. I think that the impact of baud band development on the digital all depends on how we prepare ourselves, how we organise ourselves and our nation to take advantage of opportunities and to address the challenges that broadband brings about. The broadband global Internet connection can bring access to astronomical collections of information collected worldwide. A solid and secure high-speed and nationwide broadband is a must to address the first challenge. That means the lack of access to data and information. The next important question is how to make best use of this data and information. To enhance our life, to reach our Sustainable Development Goals. Just an example in Vietnam to illustrate how we could address this challenge. So, for example, in Vietnam, the mobile broadband covers roughly 95 percent of population. But 65 percent of broadband subscribers are concentrated in big cities. Even in big cities, most subscribers use just a simple services such as email, web browsing, entertainment. And only recently the number of startups which focus on ICT enabled products and services is increasing. So through these facts we could imagine how difficult people in the country side, the farmers and under educated people in remote areas, make use of broadband capabilities. So here there is clearly inequal access to broadband opportunities. This leads to further poverty and exclusion. Here I think broadband could play an important role in the sense that broadband must be used as a

powerful tool for distance learning, online learning and for life long learning which is so vital for surviving in the fast moving digital world.

The role of the government, the importance of bridging the digital divide, I think that the government should, must take the lead. The government has to foster the broadband deployment through encouraging investment framework, the government has also to create environment favorable for innovation and for entrepreneurship. And last but not least, the government has to have new economic resources through the system which equips its people with life long learning capabilities and the ability to innovate for themselves in the fast moving digital world. In sustainable government, the government has to pay due attention to bridging the digital divide so as the broadband benefits and opportunities would spread out over the whole country.

And that is the guiding principles in Vietnam for bridging the digital divide and the role the government should play in this area. That's my answer to your question. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you, Mr. Phan Tam for your statements. That's very helpful for us. So with that we will move now to Madam Adriana, the Commissioner at the Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones in Mexico. Thank you for joining us. We will begin with the first question, which is one of the main obstacles to connect to those who are not connected to the digital ecosystem in the effective deployment of infrastructures such as broadband networks.

So what do you consider to be the best measures and practices that the states should implement to encourage and promote deployment of broadband infrastructure and networks that are necessary to bridge the digital divide?

>> ADRIANA SOFIA LABARDINI INZUNZA: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for bearing with us at this late hour. An honor to be at this table. I'm Adriana Labardini, the federal competition authority in broadcasting sectors. So from the regulators and competition authority perspective we are working and have been for almost four years when IFT was first created on the divides tackling, number one, barriers to competition. Mexico was and still is a highly concentrated markets with two incumbents, both in telecom and broadcasting. When it comes to telecom and also radio and TV we are making sure that enough spectrum is available for high-speed broadband, for Arab and TV, for trunking and for other services because we had put in the market very, not enough megahertz of spectrum. We had analog TV switch off. We had an auction for the first time in decades, radio frequents for

A.M. and F.M. We finished an AWS auction as well. We are re-banding 100-megahertz band and mandating access to the incumbent's network, local loop network.

It also has to open access to its passive infrastructure and provide wholesale services in on non-discriminate inventory basis. That has enabled for penetration of mobile and fixed services to increase in the last three years and for prices to drop dramatically. In mobile services, prices in Mexico have dropped over 40 percent in three years. Which has increased traffic and increased the number of subscriptions. We still have to work hard in increases subscriptions for mobile broadband. Currently we are only 61 percent of subscribers have a data plan when anyone percent of subscribers have mobile voice.

We also put in place a very innovative open access whole same network on the 700 megahertz band called the wholesale shared network, being deployed through a public private partnership. It will cover 92.2 percent of the population, providing LTE services for current operators and a new generation of NBNOs that will have a very key role in bridging the digital divide.

Also in the context of the sharing economy. We thought it was important to compete in services, having this very robust mobile network. It will have access to 90 megahertz in the 700 megahertz.

Now, we do need for mobile terminals using APT 700 to increase. We have almost 60 models of devices including APT 700, but we need those on the low end, not only high end. This will be key as rates for services have decreased, but we still need more and more mobile affordable smartphones. And also we are working very soon in guidelines for making, promoting IXPs to exchange traffic in Mexico locally which will improve quality and reduce costs. And also we have not only spectrum for commercial licenses but also for public TV, public radio, and telecoms. We have been issuing a number of very interesting indigenous and community licenses in the southern Mexico. There is interest in deploying telecom mobile services licenses. In those cases they don't have to get the spectrum in an automatic. We will allocate it directly. If it's a nonprofit project where communities are being connected in the 800 megahertz band. That also has been very replicable model for indigenous broadband.

We are also finally working, and the federal government is making available public buildings, federal public buildings for the deployment of infrastructure and working with municipalities so that they regulate and make it easier to

deploy whether fixed or mobile networks within their territories. And also facilitating access to federal rights-of-way.

Finally, a very important ingredient. IPv 6 and the presence of robust fiber network backbone where the Ministry is working on a very ambitious programme as well. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you. However, when we talk about the digital divide, we know that the task does not end with the deployment of infrastructure, but it is also vital to generate the necessary capabilities that allow people to use and take advantage of the information and communication technologies in a beneficial way. In this regard, what are the best practices and policies to foster the capacity building among users and to protect them in order to increase their inclusion in the digital ecosystem?

>> ADRIANA SOFIA LABARDINI INZUNZA: Thank you very much and you're absolutely right. At the institute we have been launching a number of tools for consumers to improve their skills, both in comparing rates and plans. Today we received a champion award for our tool -- thank you. Actually, Mexico received 12.

(Chuckles.)

>> ADRIANA SOFIA LABARDINI INZUNZA: Some of them from the federal government. The others for the institute in creating tools that empower consumers that allow them to compare prices, plans, and services and speeds when it comes to Internet. And to also a very important ingredient to inclusion which is accessibility for people with disabilities. We have issued a set of guidelines mandating operators to have completely accessible websites and accessible facilities and contracts, everything online and offline has to be accessible when it comes to marketing of telecommunications services. And we believe that education and communication empowers consumers. Nowadays people are consumers, producers of information, knowledge and solutions and that they just need the basic tools and ecosystem to put that wisdom and knowledge to use. We will keep working on more and more tools to make open data projects, to connect people as ICT is connecting and the prize winner today at public sites that are connected and where robotics and other digital skills are taught. Thank you very much.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you for sharing your statement with us. That will be very useful.

With that I will move now to Mr. Grigore, the Director of the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications

and Information Technology in Moldova. Thank you for joining us.

So I will start with my first question is could you inform us if there are any digital divide concerns in your country? And if yes, then how they are addressed?

>> GRIGORE VARANITA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the question. Okay. Briefly I can answer yes. We have digital divide concerns in our country. But I would like to come with some figures. In bigger cities, due to important investments we have broad band adoption between 60 percent and 80 percent of all households. 90 percent of these households and businesses are connected by means of high-speed broadband network based on FTTH, FTTB and doxy technologies.

We consider such adoption of broadband technology very encouraging. However, the Republic of Moldova has a predominantly rural population. We have almost 56 percent of rural population. And investing in rural areas is not as attractive as in urban areas. In this way the broadband adoption is lower. We can say about 20 percent starting with 20 percent of households connected by DSL. In some regions it might be 90 percent of all broadband lines.

In our policy, based on Moldova 2020, the country set ambitious targets. First, to have at least 60 percent of households connected. Secondly, to have high-speed access technologies all over 30 megabits available in each geography.

To achieve these goals we need more investments in broadband networks. It is now known that civil engineering works can represent up to 80 percent of the cost of high-speed networks deployment. Thus, Moldova's government considers reducing the cost of civil works by making available the access to all existing and suitable infrastructures.

A law on access to public and private properties and infrastructures was adopted in 16. It requires that all public and private entities that have properties and infrastructures suitable for the dough employment of networks offer access to them. Public entities are required to publish the condition for access at price. Price must be cost oriented and nondiscriminatory. Also in city the regulator has new powers to facilitate work between public and private entities and make a digital inventory of all network infrastructure and make it available to operators.

Finally the operators and public and private entities are required to public information on planned civil works in order to allow the operators to provide these networks at cost.

The granting procedures have been simplified.

Finally, briefly, these are the steps Moldova are taking to address the digital divide gap.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you very much. So if we can talk about challenges. What are the main problems related to the access to alternative infrastructures, the telecom regulator faces in Moldova, your country?

>> GRIGORE VARANITA: Thank you very much again. I can say briefly, I can speak about the two problems, two main problems related to the issue of access to alternative infrastructure. The first problem is related to the lack of experience of the private and the local authorities. Okay, and the public bodies the same.

And even if there is a methodology on cost calculation for access of public bodies to private infrastructure, it is hard for public bodies to calculate the rates. Of course, these problems should have been foreseen and avoided by letting this to be solved commercially or giving the regulator the power to indicate the indicative prices, but this is the future decision. And another problem is linked of the existing possibilities and capacities of our agency to develop the telephonic inventory on existing infrastructure. Now we are looking for ways how we could implement it. Thank you.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you very much for your thoughtful responses. So we will move now to our last speaker in this session, Madam Maya, the Executive Director of 50 More Ventures. Thank you for joining us. My question is, in view of advances in technologies, what can be done to avoid the digital divide?

>> MAYA PLENTZ FAGUNDES: Thank you very much, first of all, for all of you that are still here. And thank you very much for inviting me to be in this distinguished panel.

My concern has been so far always that working with startups and entrepreneurs both in Europe and in Latin America is an issue that is transversal to all the efforts we have into bringing better broadband, more broadband to rural communities as well as in other countries which do not have the privilege of having access to high-speed Internet, is the issue that women are often not part of the decision making process of how these technologies will be deployed and how they can help them, because you have to remember half of the world's population, if not slightly more than half, are women. We are talking about young women who could be, there could be greater focus on policies throughout all the sectors of the economy where they would engage more and educate young women not only to become engineers but also to become active users, but active creators of content and of uses of technology.

So it is really important that at this point in time we do not forget that that is Sustainable Development Goal number five. We need to make sure with the policymaking we do not forget women.

If you think for a women, I would like you to think about this right now. It's very late in the afternoon. I would like for you to stand up if you have a close relative who is from the feminine sex, either a mother, daughter other wife that works in technology or in the digital economy.

Stand up. Please.

Okay, we have two, three. In a room of what 70? Okay, we have one more, four! If we were to count -- five! Getting better.

I want you to remember when you go home tonight, talk to your wife or mother or daughter or if you don't have any of those available to talk to, talk to the neighbor's daughter and try to see how they are participating. Not only as consumers of, because we know the young are on their smartphones, but some parts of the world they are not. And I want you to encourage them to participate and to engage as creators of content. And as people who will create companies too.

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: Thank you very much for your statement. Very helpful. So now I just was informed that we have to leave in a few minutes. So we have to conclude. We are at the end of this session. I want to ask if you have other questions, other statements to say? Or not?

Thank you.

So with that, I hope everyone enjoyed the dialogue. Please join me in thanking all our distinguished panelists for their thoughtful and insight full responses to the questions. It was really a very interesting discussion. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

>> HABIB KAMMOUN: So the summary will be provided during the concluding session tomorrow at 4:30. Thank you for your attention. I just have an announcement. So could you please, you have the Swiss reception now at the CG place, the venue of the opening session today, this morning. Please enjoy the reception and see you tomorrow. Thank you.

(The session concluded at 1830 CET.)

***

* * *