

Raw file

ITU - International Telecommunication Union
World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2022
Celebration

17 May 2022
1300 CET

Services provided by:
Caption First, Inc.
P.O. Box 3066
Monument, CO 80132
+001-719-481-9835
www.captionfirst.com

This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law.

>> Excellencies, honorable guests, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to all present today in our Popov Room out at ITU headquarters and to all of you following us remotely. I am max Jacobson-Gonzalez, I will be your moderator today.

On behalf of the elected officials of the International Telecommunication Union, Mr. Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General, Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau, Mr. Chaesub Lee, and Ms. Bogdan-Martin of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, a big thank you for joining us from around the world to celebrate World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, WTISD, 2022.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day has been celebrated annually every year since 1969, and it's to mark the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention 157 years ago in 1865. WTISD 2022 puts a spotlight on digital technologies for older persons and healthy ageing,

reflecting a demographic trend of the 21st century and in support of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.

To start the celebrations, we'd like to present a short video we have prepared for you on this very important topic, the impact digital technology may have on ageing populations worldwide. Thank you.

(Music)

>> Connectivity is becoming ever more important. At every stage of life, in every part of our lives. Ageing has emerged as a defining trend of the 21st century. The International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies, promotes digital inclusion for all.

New and emerging technologies can help the world's ageing population stay connected with friends and family, continue living fulfilling lives, and remain valuable members of our communities.

By building smarter cities, combating age-based discrimination, ensuring financial inclusion of older persons, and empowering millions of caregivers worldwide, we can ensure that older persons benefit from digital transformation.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day reminds us to make the world's accelerating digital transformation available and accessible to everyone.

In support of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, let us together ensure digital technologies empower older persons and enable healthy ageing.

(Applause)

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Dear ladies and gentlemen, we will now move on with today's programme, starting with the United Nations Secretary-General's message, which is kindly shared with us, which I will read for you now and which is also being displayed on the screen.

On this World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, we focus on digital technologies for older person and healthy ageing. From building smarter cities to combating age-based discrimination at the workplace, ensuring financial inclusion, safeguarding independence, and supporting millions of caregivers around the world -- information technology has vast potential to improve the lives of older people and their families and communities.

But to make the most of the opportunities presented by 5G, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, digital health, and other technologies, we must dramatically improve accessibility and inclusivity.

Nearly half of humanity still has no access to the Internet. We must connect everyone, everywhere, by 2030 -- because leaving no one behind means leaving no one offline. At the same time, we must take action to prevent and reduce the dangers of information technology, including the spread of misinformation and the exploitation of personal data.

This is the vision of my Roadmap for Digital

Cooperation -- to embrace the promise of digital technology while protecting people from its perils.

I commend the International Telecommunication Union for its vital work narrowing the digital divide, setting standards, and connecting people wherever they are, whatever their means.

On World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, let us commit to working together to ensure the technology is equitable, safe, and affordable for all people at all ages.

We should thank the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Guterres for his official message celebrating WTISD together with us all.

Now we would like to play you a short video from the Director General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

(Please watch the captioned video.)

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: It's my great pleasure to invite Mr. Houlin Zhao, the ITU Secretary-General, to the lectern to deliver his remarks. Thank you.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors, head of UN agencies, leaders of NGOs, dear panelists, dear participants, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this panel marking the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2022.

Let me start by thanking the UN Secretary-General for reaffirming the urgent need to connect people of all ages by 2030. I would also like to acknowledge the video message issued by the Director-General of the World Health Organization in which Dr. Tedros highlighted the challenge of giving older persons access to transformative digital technologies.

That is what brings us today together. Incredible access to digital technologies isn't just a moral responsibility; it is essential for global prosperity and sustainability. This includes more than 1 billion people aged 60 years or older at the centre of this year's celebrations. This group of population, which is growing larger and larger, has greatly contributed to the social and economic achievements of our time. With time passing, they are now facing new opportunities and challenges. They deserve our care and help.

I am well pleased that ITU members have decided to focus their efforts on older persons this year. It's the first in the history of this day, and it could not have come at a better time. For more than two years now, lives have been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. For older people even more so than the rest of the population. Technologies have been a real lifeline. ITU has built on this moment to raise the profile of the digital challenges and opportunities facing ageing population. Most notably, by producing a range of resources, such as toolkits, training courses, and reports. We are also developing key international standards, like the recently approved Standard for Accessible Telehealth

Systems and Services developed jointly with WHO. This is all part of ITU's contribution to the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and our commitment to ensuring that everyone everywhere can equally and equitably make use of digital technologies.

The global multi-stakeholder platform offered by the WSIS Forum also plays an important role in this effort. From its special track on ICTs and older persons to the WSIS Forum Healthy Ageing Innovation Crisis to the WSIS multi-stakeholder audience on ICTs and older persons. I trust that we will continue to see the same level of engagement in supporting digital inclusion for people of all ages at our World Telecommunication Development Conference, which will be held in Kigali very soon. In June. And later, in September, and our conference to be held in Bucharest, Romania.

The stakes are high. Close to 3 billion people are still unconnected. The most vulnerable populations are the most at risk of being left offline. Including people aged 60 years old and older whose number will double by the middle of this century.

To talk about these challenges and opportunities, we are honored to be joined by outstanding panelists, including Her Excellency, Ms. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, Minister for Communications and Digitalization of Ghana. And Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab Deputy Director-General. And Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary-General of International Federation on Ageing.

I would like to just praise the good effort by (?) who made the long journey from Canada just to join this event.

On this day together, let's send a strong signal that older persons have a huge contribution to make to the digital society and economy. Let us reaffirm the need to break the cycle of exclusion and strengthen ICT development. Let this message be heard far and wide.

I look forward to our conversation, and I wish you a happy World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2022.

I am pleased to see that events like this are being organized around the world by our Member States and our partners. My sincere thanks to all of them for celebrating this day and helping our older people take full advantage of ICT.

I wish all senior citizens a happy, healthy life, empowered by the benefits of digital technologies.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, Secretary-General, for your opening remarks highlighting the need to bridge the digital divide and provide equitable access for all, including older persons.

Presidents now time to welcome our distinguished panelists that are with us today to discuss this year's theme of Digital Technologies for Older Persons and Healthy Ageing. And a couple of housekeeping notes before we start. If you are in the Popov in Geneva, we need you to put on the headsets in front of you here, as in order to hear all of our panelists using the wonders of modern

technology, we are going to be having some panelists joining us remotely.

Also, we have interpretation in French on both Zoom and in the room, and you will need to select the appropriate channel. And we also have captioning for you as well.

And to our panelists, we have to keep strictly to time in order to ensure that we have interpretation throughout, so please don't get too carried away in your answers. But not too short as well, of course. Thank you very much, indeed.

So without further ado, I would like to introduce you to Dr. Zsuzsanna, who is the Deputy Director of the World Health Organization, and we are particularly grateful to you for joining us today, as we know this is a very busy period for all of you at the WHO, with the World Health Assembly about to begin on the 22nd of May. Please extend our thanks to the WHO Director-General for his video message, and welcome, and thank you very much for being here on the panel session.

So I will start off with the first question for you. I'd like to ask you, COVID-19 and multiple global challenges have slowed the health process that countries have committed to in the coming years. What is WHO's strategy for accelerating progress that is inclusive of older persons, and what role does digital innovation play in this process?

>> ZSUZSANNA JAKAB: Thank you very much, and good morning, good afternoon, good evening, Mr. Zhao, Excellencies, colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, happy birthday to ITU and many happy returns of the day on the occasion of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Let me also start by emphasizing that it's wonderful to be in a face-to-face meeting, and thanks, Mr. Zhao, for inviting us, inviting WHO, and also for selecting this very important topic as the topic of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day today.

So back to your question, Mr. Moderator. Yes, indeed, digital technologies play a crucial role in building inclusive societies. All world is now confronted with mull dim challenges, pandemics, climate change, war, and inequality. As a result, countries are falling behind on their Sustainable Development Goals. Just to mention for universal health coverage, we are progressing at one-fourth of the pace needed to meet the health-related Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

On the bright side, however, in the 21st century, our world is experiencing the two most significant historical changes ever experienced in the last hundred years. We live in a digital world, and our population is ageing. These two remarkable trends have profound implications under society, but they also offer unprecedented opportunities for sustainable development.

Today, half of the world lacks access to essential health services. According to the last universal health coverage report, in the European countries, one in ten older persons experience unmet

health or social care needs due to the cost. Also, the unmet care needs vary by income levels. Older persons with low household incomes are more likely to experience unmet health and social needs.

COVID-19 disproportionately affected older people, and the pandemic has revealed that no country is fully prepared for health emergencies. In the WHO Global Pulse Survey, 50% or more of the countries reported disruptions across all services for older people due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO's agenda for the next five years envisages doubling the rate of countries' progress towards universal health coverage target and health-related SDGs, inclusive of older people. In January 2022, our Director-General outlined five priorities for the recovery and commitment which will be further discussed next week at the World Health Assembly.

One thing to emphasize is harnessing the power of digital technologies was highlighted as critical enablers to achieve our three main goals. One is to shift the care paradigm towards promoting health and well-being. The second one is to develop systems towards primary healthcare. And the third one is to strengthen the systems for epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response at all levels.

In recent years, WHO has harnessed the potential of digital technologies and produced practical digital tools to support the countries. Just very briefly mention three. WHO has emerging programme in partnership with ITU, which is a tool for self-management and care. Secondly, to support the countries in providing better services for older people, we launched an integrated care for older people handbook application in eight languages as a tool. And finally, to encourage digital innovations, WHO has also been working with ITU in organizing the WSIS Forum special track on ICT for older people and healthy ageing innovation.

Thank you. Back to you.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed, Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab.

Now I would like to welcome Her Excellency, Ms. Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, who is the Minister of Ministry of Communication and Digitization, Ghana. She has championed bridging the digital divide and closely involved in a number of ITU-led initiatives and programmes, which we are very grateful. Ghana is one of the good case examples of digital inclusion, in particular including older persons in digital policies.

So Ursula, are you there with us? Yes, you are. I can see. Fantastic. I wanted to ask you, could you please share with us the story of Ghana's national ageing policy and the role of ICTs in its implementation.

>> URSULA OWUSU-EKUFU: Thank you, Chair, Secretary-General, directors of the ITU, WHO, and the UN and fellow panelists. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and a happy World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. (Low audio volume).

I must congratulate the ITU for highlighting the need to

include people of all ages, including our ageing populations in the policies and programmes that we roll up, particularly to promote digital inclusion.

In Ghana, we have been fostering digital inclusion with the development of a national ageing policy since 2010, and the goal of the policy is to achieve the overall social, economic, and cultural reintegration of older persons into mainstream society to enable them, as far as practical, to participate fully in the national development process.

As we see the breakdown of traditional family units, with more urbanization, we need to provide our ageing populations around the country with another alternative safety net, and we found that technology, as has been stated earlier, provides a very useful bridge to enable them to connect to provide for their healthcare and to provide for us to continue to benefit from the wealth of experience that they have.

Our government believes that older persons are entitled to retain their personal autonomy and particularly have access to food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education, training, work, and other income-generating activities and live in a decent and safe environment. We want them to continue to participate in their society and pursue their own personal development and even capture their experiences for learning and teaching the younger generation.

Without technology, it would be difficult for us to continue to tap into this wealth of knowledge that they have. And the barriers that -- urbanization, living far from each other -- have brought to all of us make it imperative that we also utilize the tools at our disposal to bridge those gaps. We are using technology to implement the national ageing policy through acquiring an integrated national data system and building the database to include activity and social interventions for all, including the aged. We are implementing a Ghana card initiative, which is being managed by the National Identification Authority to provide a complete value-added, integrated multisectoral and multipurpose ID system through the use and application of ICTs to initiate the social, economic and political development of Ghana. Integrating existing data with this national ID system, and that includes the Social Security and national insurance trust data, which is being integrated into our ID system. To simplify the process of verifying users' identity and to ensure rapid treatment of pension-related files and to give us an accurate depiction much those who are actually eligible for pensions and those who are in the ageing bracket as well.

Our health security is coordinating to make it possible for all residents in Ghana to use one card for healthcare access, and it is also being accepted for all financial transactions as well as we re-register all SIM cards to improve our data sets in that regard as well. These digital technologies make it easier for us to determine and have empirical evidence of the number of the aged and make it easier for us to plan for them and for the distribution of resources and amenities to them as well. This is how we are using

technology to include the aged and gather the proper data on them.

We are also working on giving them the digital skills that they need to be able to engage with digital platforms that are being set up and extending connectivity to all parts of the country to enable them to have real access to the digital tools that are available to them. And we are seeing increasingly many of our aged populations engaging through social media as well to connect with their families and friends, make new ones, and have another life Internet of Things side the workplace on retirement. So this is what we are doing with our ageing policy. And we are also going to set up a council on ageing to implement this national ageing policy, which was set up in 2010.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you, Minister.

(Applause)

Excellent initiatives there.

Now we turn to Ms. My Linh Kha, Senior Vice President and General Manager for Japan Asia-Pacific of Amgen, unlocking -- by discovering, developing, manufacturing, and delivering innovative human therapeutics. Miss Kha, welcome, and thank you for joining us to represent the private sector, in particular the biotechnology companies, in this High-Level Panel.

My first question to you is how can digital technology and innovation positively impact healthcare outcomes for patients as caregivers?

>> MY LINH KHA: Thank you. Firstly, let me thank the International Telecommunication Union for inviting me to join you today to mark this really important occasion, the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. Congratulations also to the ITU on its 157th anniversary. I found out this is the oldest union of its kind formed back in the 1800s around telegraph communications, so a little piece of information I didn't know before. And very important it is as well.

So I am delighted and honored to be here representing the private sector, and in our capacity as a member of the Global Coalition on Ageing. Digital health and data are now almost at our fingertips when it comes to predicting and preventing health conditions, something very important to my industry and our company. This data, this technology sits on everything that we touch almost on a daily basis -- computers, servers. It's in databases that are routinely connected and stored everywhere all the time.

Now, we talked quite a bit about the world and how much it's changed in the last couple of years, but not so long ago, imagine the idea scanning a QR code to announce our arrival at a local cafe or flashing our vaccine status before entering a restaurant? This would have been unthinkable, but we do it routinely now, and the data is captured and shared, and we also have the capabilities to give us alerts around when we've been in close contact with someone who might have been infected with COVID. So the technology is really powerful.

So how do we harness this technology? From our perspective, how healthcare is delivered can also undergo tremendous change. In the U.S. alone, the growth of telehealth has steadied out to 38 times as of February 2021. The volume of consultations since before COVID, 38 times, peaking at almost 80% of pre-COVID volumes by April 2020.

Industry and the private sector more broadly are quick to respond to the challenges of our pandemic. We leverage technology nearly overnight at the onset of COVID and throughout to ensure that we would continue to serve our customers. Scientific exchange, where we utilize webinars and Zooms to engage with healthcare professionals, increased between 300 and 3250 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. Further, doctors adopted telemedicine to make sure they could see their patients.

It was a capability we saw as years away that became a reality within weeks and days. And I would like to share with you a couple of examples. You know, when I watched the video shown at the beginning of the session, it made me smile because it really reminded me of my parents. Like many of us, my parents are ageing, and over time, I've become increasingly involved with their health and wellness. My parents, while relatively fit and well, are directly benefitting from this rise in digital technology. My mom, like many, many women her age, has osteoporosis, and she receives a text message prompt for her to visit her doctor for her regular osteoporosis injections. Results of her bone density scans can be uploaded to a health app so that we can track and see her improvements over time. She also tracks a myriad of other health markers, including her daily exercise activity, because it's important that she stays mobile and does resistance training.

As for my dad, like many Asian elderly men, he suffers from diabetes. He tracks his cardiovascular health and blood sugar data, which can be sent to his doctors for monitoring, connecting him in ways that was only possible by physically getting in the car, driving across town, and visiting the clinic.

So when we talk about access, when we talk about removing barriers, these two examples are really really. And for me, it's interesting to see how we, my sister and I, we have become the ones that are really pushing for and nagging my parents to do the things that they need to do to look after their health.

Let me share with you also from a company and an industry level as well. We've been actively exploring the application of mobile health, information technology, wearable devices, telemedicine, and other new technologies to support patients. We've supported implementation of an innovative telemedicine projects to enable patients discharged from hospital with high cholesterol on cholesterol treatments to refill their prescriptions through an online platform. And while I use myself and my own company as an example, I want to acknowledge that across our industry, almost all companies like ours are investing in health technology to deliver better outcomes for patients.

So technology can help patients start therapy, stay on therapy, track their health and wellness. It supports healthcare. It provides ways to address health needs and enables access to services even when health expertise is at a distance.

Now, we often talk about the empowered patient, and for many, many years, especially in managing elderly patients with chronic diseases, it feels as if we were looking for an elusive unicorn. But technology and communications is enabling this to happen at a fast pace and a grand scale.

Thank you.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed. And now I would like to turn to Dr. Jane Barratt, who has joined us from Canada today, and she also has a lovely Australian accent, so just to confuse issues, I am also Australian as well, so I am a bit biased. But I wanted to thank you very much for being with us in person to celebrate this important day. The International Federation on Ageing, the IFA, was a member of the civil society movement that championed the United Nations' principles for older people in 1999, amongst other things, of course.

Now, my question for you is digital inclusion strategies, while critically important, are not easy to implement. What are the key principles that governments, policymakers, and all stakeholders, including private sector, should consider to ensure the reduction of social isolation and loneliness amongst older people?

Thank you.

>> JANE BARRATT: Thank you very much.

First and foremost, before I answer that very complicated question, I would like to thank very much ITU, Mr. Zhao, Excellencies, distinguished persons and colleagues from around the world.

This is as day to celebrate, not only because of birthday, but particularly because the focus is on older people.

Digital technologies for, with, about older people, and most importantly, healthy ageing. I do want to step back just a moment and say that as a backdrop, the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 forms one of our principles for today. It talks about global collaboration. It talks about alignment with the last ten years of SDGs. But most importantly, it talks about bringing together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media, the private sector to improve the lives of older people.

We talk about digital technologies and digitalization and integration, but without the collaboration and partnership of all of those stakeholders that I have just mentioned, it's not going to happen. Digital technologies and information are a cross-cutting theme and impact the outcomes of the decade actions, and these actions are: Long-term care, integrated care of older people, age-friendly environments, and combating ageism. And Dr. Jakab did mention integrated care of older people, ICO. And digital technologies are a cross-cutting theme. They are almost a thread through which

positive change can occur around the world, with those connections and partnerships that I first mentioned.

In our mind, there are three fundamental principles. They are: Prevention, access, and equity.

If we look at prevention to begin with -- and the previous speaker from Amgen mentioned it very well in terms of the capabilities of technology in prevention and monitoring and the importance of technology in data collection and data collection being evidence that will actually inform policy development that is effective. Digital technologies throughout life is a key pillar of expanded prevention strategies, but it means investment from Member States. But it also needs investment from civil society and industry and agencies such as ITU. And it's a central component, in our minds, of comprehensive public health strategies to improve universal health coverage.

The second principle is about barriers, removing barriers to access for appropriate digital technologies throughout life, to ensure all people are protected and no one is left behind. But it goes beyond connections. You know, we talk connections in the context of technology. But we know very little about how the connections happen and whether being connected is sufficient in this world.

We talked a lot about social isolation and loneliness and mental health and anxiety and depression within the pandemic time, of which we are still in. But in fact, all of those words, all of those feelings of depression, the diagnosis were happening well before the pandemic. They have exposed some of the brutal realities of social isolation. But a tablet is not going to mean that social isolation doesn't exist. We have to do better in understanding how to apply those technologies and the impact of the technology. Because perhaps the technology is not what we need to do. Perhaps that discussion across a table, as I had with Mr. Zhao this morning. So it's this balance between understanding the applicability of technologies when it comes to person to person, but also using the power of technology in prevention and also equity and access. And that's equity and access to assessments, treatment, management, monitoring, making that connection between ICO and the long-term care framework of the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

And finally, the third principle, reducing inequities, timely, appropriate, and affordable access to technology.

So what I have talked about, I have given you the backdrop to why the International Federation on Ageing feels that it's so important to be here today to celebrate, but also to give the message that we are in the second year of the Decade of Healthy Ageing, which is aligned with the SDGs the last ten years, underpinned by the critical actions of protecting and respecting the rights of older people.

I also mentioned prevention, access, equity, as the three foundation principles that we use when we are thinking of and enacting digital technologies. But I now also want to turn to while we recognize and celebrate this day and recognize population ageing,

we want to also acknowledge the launch of the first Global Report on Assistive Technology. The acronym is GRAT. Improving access to technology for every single child. Why? Because if those children have the opportunity to live in an enabling environment, they all have the opportunity to grow older, and that's what we have to do.

What is our life course approach in implementation to digital decades? Let us not divide up our population. You know, this is our opportunity to positively disrupt and implement a life course approach. For the 240 million children with disabilities in the world, technology and assistive technology and devices are often the first step for childhood development, access to education, participation in sports and civic life, and getting ready for employment, like any other children. Let me put a different word in that. For the 2.1 billion older people by 2050, the world is still open to them to access education, to participate in sports and civic life, and to get ready for their third and fourth career and their contribution to society.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Zhao, to be with you today. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed, Jane. That was wonderful.

Now I would like to ask a second question to you, Zsuzsanna Jakab. We have heard a lot about health coverage. I want to ask you even though the world's population is ageing, no doubt about that, in your view, what role should digital technology play in improving universal health coverage for older people?

>> ZSUZSANNA JAKAB: Thank you very much for this very complex question. And as you say, population ageing is good, it's going ahead, and it's a sign of progress. So that is very good.

For the first time in the history, most people can expect to live into their 60s and beyond. However, the fact that older people today are experiencing poorer health than their parents is less encouraging. In the coming years, older countries can and should prepare for the upcoming reality of the demographic shift by adopting digital solutions to promote healthy ageing and to organize equitable healthcare that is responsive to older people's needs.

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, to which Dr. Barratt also referred to, declared by the World Health Assembly and the UN again Assembly in 2020 as a WHO-led collaboration to improve the lives of older people, their families, and their communities provides an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of these digital technologies.

The provision of integrated and person-centred primary healthcare for older people is key to achieving universal health coverage. We must achieve the paradigm from a disease-specific approach to a person-centred approach in primary healthcare. Older people should be offered care and support based on their needs and not on age, determined by methods of person-centred assessment documented by the WHO integrated care for older people guideline.

Healthcare services and other interventions to promote healthy ageing are valuable only if they reach the people who need them and are used properly and sustainably. Improving universal health coverage for older people requires substantial and concrete progress in three main areas. First, providing all older persons with access to services. Secondly, providing a full spectrum of essential quality health and social care services for older people. And thirdly, protecting older people from the overwhelming financial consequences of paying for their health. And I'd like to underline this last one.

Digital technologies play an important role in supporting health systems, including the local communities. Digital technologies have been used by countries during the COVID-19 pandemic to close the care gap. Since older people were shielded at home and identified as vulnerable to severe outcomes, digital technologies were deployed to help deliver care and mitigate social isolation.

Digital health technology immediately after the outbreak, many countries issued teleradiology and tele-health as well as prescription and drug delivery. WHO advocated for telemedicine as a way to provide healthcare for patients in need and to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 was vital to hospitals. However, the question is are older adults who need healthcare as well prepared as possible for this rapid change? Evidence suggests that older adults -- than younger adults. And accelerated digitalization has further exacerbated these inequalities, since many older persons have been unable to access essential goods and services such as vaccination appointment, registrations online, pensions, food, and medication during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the fact that many governments did not pay attention to the digital skills of the adult -- older adults. As a result, there has been a huge disparity in telemedicine and other services provided to older people. Therefore, the digital inclusion of older people should be at the core of future innovations. This is why this panel discussion, Mr. Secretary-General, is so important today. In the context of universal health coverage, it is important to keep in mind that the use of digital technologies to expand UHC is a means to an end. Our focus on the mechanisms to ensure that older people can access services without financial burden will be absolutely crucial.

So to conclude, Mr. Moderator, universal health coverage for older people is an affordable dream. The advancement towards universal health coverage is both technically possible and economically feasible. And it can be accelerated with the support of digital innovations, even for low resource settings, but political commitment is required to make this a reality. Thank you.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed.

So last, but certainly not least, I would like to welcome Justin Derbyshire from HelpAge International, an international NGO that helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination, and overcome poverty so that they can lead dignified, secure, active, and healthy lives. Justin has been waiting very

patiently to give us his contribution here, so I'd like to ask you, Justin, who is at most risk of being left behind as digital technologies and innovations are developed and increasingly being mainstreamed into health and care service delivery, and why?

>> JUSTIN DERBYSHIRE: Well, thank you very much for hosting this event and for the focus on older people and population ageing. Thank you very much to my fellow panelists for some very thought-provoking comments.

What we are seeing at HelpAge International is that advances in digital tools and technology, it's low-income households, rural communities, women, people with disabilities, those that speak non-majority languages who are being left behind. Worryingly are experiences that the digital divide is exacerbating preexisting equity issues. This may change in the coming decades, as future older people are more highly educated and have more life experience with digital technology, but at the moment, particularly in lower- and middle-income countries, equity and inclusion is a big concern for us. Those with low incomes, those in rural areas, and older women in particular are not having the access they need to support their requirements.

The common barriers that we are experiencing are literacy, digital literacy, accessibility languages, and access to the technology, especially for those who often live without electricity or no available Wi-Fi. We are also seeing huge issues with media literacy, particularly leading to the spread of disinformation, which we saw with information around the COVID-19 vaccine.

Now, a recent report by our partner HelpAge India found that only 4% of older people in India use the Internet. We have done further reports looking at different parts of Asia, and the analysis of surveyed data from the International Telecommunication Union suggested that less than 10% of older people have access to the Internet in Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand. Even in tech-savvy high-income countries, such as Singapore, fewer than half the older people surveyed were comfortable using technologies that are easily available, such as having video conversations with family or scanning QR codes. We are also seeing the gender divide is very clear. Women of all ages in low- and middle-income countries are 20% less likely than men to own a smartphone.

There is an opportunity here with investment, with the right policies for social connection, telehealth, and telecare to improve income security, improve health, and give greater access to such things as universal social pension. With telecare and telehealth, we provide -- we have heard today -- real innovative solutions to extending quality care services. But these need to be included within universal health coverage, and they need to be properly supported, or they will only widen the equity gaps. Without investment, without age-friendly policies that tackle exclusion and ageism, the digital divide will further increase inequality, particularly for those with low incomes, those in rural areas, and

older women.

The lessons that we have learned with our partners and network members at HelpAge International is that you need to engage diverse older people in the research, the data, and the design and evaluation of digital tech and ICT for health. That you need to train healthcare staff and community workers on ageism. And that you need to take intergenerational approaches that focus on creating inclusive communities for all ages.

Thank you very much for the time today.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed, Justin. We'll come back to you shortly.

Now I'd like to turn to Ms. My Linh Kha, and you mentioned about the fact that technology was helping to make the tracking of diseases like osteoporosis and diabetes a lot easier and not necessarily have to rely on going to the doctors and travel miles for that. But I wanted to bring up the topic of the resilience of our healthcare systems. I think that the media is constantly covering how stretched they are, particularly in these times of health crisis, and I wanted to ask you, what is the role of technology in building resilience of our healthcare systems, and how can we harness information and technology to improve the resilience of our healthcare systems?

>> MY LINH KHA: Thanks for the question, and let me clarify. It's actually a New Zealand accent that you are hearing, but --

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: I have been away for too long. Thank you very much for that. We are close neighbors, absolutely. Thank you.

>> MY LINH KHA: That's right. You might be able to hear the clipped vowels when I say fish.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Absolutely.

>> MY LINH KHA: Let me answer your question. At a system level, the use of new technologies like artificial intelligence and predictive analytics can provide really very powerful information that can help healthcare systems and deliver resiliency. It can provide an early warning to who in our population is at risk. For instance, for hip fractures, for cardiovascular disease, and for cancer.

Now, our current healthcare system is designed to rapidly and effectively fix that which is broken. But the digital revolution can allow us to predict who is at risk of disease and prevent that disease from arising in the first place.

For example, a person most likely to be at risk of osteoporosis is a woman over the age of 70, and yet in many countries, four out of five women with osteoporosis have never been diagnosed and are, therefore, not treated. A solution to this problem could be identifying the right population using the right data, information, that will help society not just identify who is at risk but who is not receiving or seeking the right care.

How much better is it to stop a break than fix it? And while we are using osteoporosis as an example, meta-analysis of studies

show that women have a nearly threefold increase in mortality risk one year after a hip fracture. Older adults have a five to eight times higher risk of dying within the first three years -- sorry -- three months of a hip fracture compared to those without a hip fracture.

Now, from a system perspective, we can reduce cost, address population health, and deliver sustainable long-term evaluative healthcare ecosystems. But for a patient, consider the pain, the decreased social engagement, increased dependence, and a worse quality of life, particularly in our most vulnerable, the elderly.

However, that data and the ability to apply digital technologies is often impacted by structural issues and data privacy. Now, this is not to say that privacy and other matters should be abandoned. Absolutely not. They should be understood and accommodated to allow us to find ways to better predict who is on the path to poor health and how we can collectively offer support and direction to that person who needs it to prevent their future ill health.

As a company, we now support a growing number of healthy ageing initiatives, big and small, at the personal and the health system level to enable healthy ageing. Many of these examples utilize digital technology and communications. Like many in the private sector, we are working through partnerships to utilize technology, to identify individuals at risk, to help steer their choices towards positive preventive steps, thereby reducing the overall burden on the local population.

And to conclude, I have a call to action, and I am speaking on behalf of me personally and patients like my mom and dad. We are most definitely in the data, the information age, but also, as populations, we are going through a major demographic shift, and we are ageing. The benefits of digital technologies should be applied not only to those who have grown up with technology but also to those who are older in ways that meet the use, needs, and circumstances.

The United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing is, at its core, about helping people grow older well. And through that, the Decade urges us -- and I quote -- "strive to harness technological, scientific, medical, including new treatments, assistive technologies, and innovations that can foster healthy ageing."

We advocate that the use of digital technology can play a key role in moving from the current reactive break-and-fix healthcare model to a proactive and innovative public health approach aimed to predict and health prevent the impact of serious diseases from occurring. This is true resiliency. No one group or sector can achieve this alone. Working together across all sectors will be critical to this endeavor. We look forward to playing our part as well. Thank you.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed. I stand corrected.

So I wanted to now turn the floor back to Dr. Jane Barratt, and I wanted to ask you in terms of return on investment, ROI, for

society in designing tailored technologies specifically for older adults, what is the return on investment for society in designing tailored technologies specifically for older adults, and to what degree is ageism -- I am talking about personal, interpersonal, institutional -- barrier to the future for old every people?

>> JANE BARRATT: Thank you very much, Mr. Moderator. I did want to return just momentarily to my colleague, Justin Derbyshire's statement. The data -- and this is real-life data from HelpAge International, and it is once again a reminder of the lack of connection, digital connection, for a large population of older people. And I think it's easy to skip over those numbers. But for any one person that's not connected, that may mean that they are actually not getting their pension or their income security. If they are not able to be reached. So it can be a life-and-death situation. It can be survival for older people.

And that made me start thinking about how do we encourage investment in digital technologies in older people? Is it just going to be that area that we talk about but governments don't invest in? I think it's a real question that we need to ask ourselves. What is the return on investment for digital technologies and older people, and how can we encourage governments to invest in that infrastructure?

We often talk about return on investment from an economic perspective, and we can certainly do that when we talk about designing tailored technologies for greater efficiencies in healthcare systems, as my colleague earlier has talked about. Yet I want to suggest today that the resulting effect of the appropriate technologies is the environment that enables an older person to do what they have reason to value. And that phrase, how do we create an environment that enables an older person to do what they have reason to value, is exactly the same as those that are middle aged, those that are earlier. So technology has the capacity and capability to create environments that enable. And yet it's not only technologies that will help achieve it.

Mr. Moderator talked about ageism, and I do want to touch on that because I want to put to you that technology is not a panacea, but it is one of the most important tools that we can use to combat ageism in the world today. Ageism is the way that we think, feel, and act about age and ageing. And it is associated -- and we know it's associated from the World Report on Ageism, which was launched last year -- we know that it's related to poorer physical and mental health, increased social isolation and loneliness, greater financial insecurity, decreased quality of life, and premature death.

So what about if we think about technology as an enabler, not dissimilar to the other decade enablers, such as voice in engagement, and HelpAge use voice engagement, gathering evidence around the real-life experiences of older people. Technology is an enabler.

And it's also an enabler in terms of connecting stakeholders, and that's another one of the Decade enablers.

The third and fourth is that for this to be a reality, it requires leadership and capacity building, and that's one of the benefits of being here today across sector, across disciplines. But we also need data. And a call to those that are listening, either here and around the world, we do not collect age-disaggregated data very well at all, if at all in some countries. And without that, we can't develop policies. It doesn't happen. And without evidence, there is no investment. And so we can continue talking about the importance of digital technologies in older people, but the rubber will need to hit the road somewhere.

Transformation is a generational driver of change, and it requires policies and investments that address technology inequality based on age. And it goes beyond just developing the hardware to understand how to affect the success to transmit knowledge and skills and enhance empathy. And I applaud industry and governments and civil society that work with older people to develop technologies, but it cannot stop there. We have to actually have long-term studies, longitudinal data, looking at the impact of certain technologies on X and Y. Because that's the future. That is transformational change. Not digital technologies.

The intergenerational interventions, you know, one of the key areas of action in the World Report to Combat Ageism can contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation of different generations. And we have seen it in many other public health interventions of our time. And vaccination is only one. You know, the intergenerational communication and collective understanding of the power of technology would help drive change.

So we, each and every one of us, we are members of a global community, and we are here today because we want to be part of cultural change. That requires us to continually challenge our own opinions, the status quo of not only ITU but IFA and Amgen and governments around the world. Unless we challenge the status quo, we will not drive this transformational change.

And finally, we need to experiment, and we need to get comfortable with failure. Because it's only through failure that we'll actually understand how to scale up the power of digital technologies and connect and apply technologies to improve the quality of life of older people, whether they are living in Gimli, in the heart of Manitoba, or in Nepal, in Australia, all over the world.

Thank you very much.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed, Jane. Wise words indeed.

In case you are wondering about the Minister of Ghana, unfortunately, she was called away and is unable to carry on with the panel discussion. But that doesn't mean to say that we don't appreciate very much her involvement, and we thank you very much, indeed, for having joined us.

It is now my turn to ask Justin Derbyshire to address our final question, actually. It seems to have gone very quickly indeed.

Justin, if you are there, I'd like to ask you what would you like to see more of to address the gaps and ensure that older people, particularly those in low resource settings, are able to enjoy the benefits that ICT can bring?

>> JUSTIN DERBYSHIRE: Well, thank you very much, again, for time and for very thoughtful question. I mean, we really need government and others to look at actively considering the diverse older people in the population and what barriers they may face in accessing digital technology and services. Jane and others have highlighted ageism is a key barrier, both internalized ageism and also across society.

From our experience at HelpAge, working with communities and older people in Vietnam, we have seen how, when older people have been trialed using different health screening apps with them, we've experienced three key barriers. Older people self-ageism, ageism within the community, and poor design of technology due to lack of engagement with older people and in the process. Obviously, that ageism in the community, we have seen frequent comments that older people wouldn't be able to use the app, they cannot use the app because they are too old. When we approached older people, we saw themselves they didn't want to -- resistance to using the technology, saying they couldn't use the app before they even practiced using it. And then when we took people into different focus groups and went through it with volunteers and older people, it was clear that the different apps that we were trialing with them, that the introduction to the app was very difficult because it hadn't been designed in a user-friendly way. Older people, all volunteers, hadn't been engaged. And we are really seeing that a lot more effort has to go into including older people in the design of the digital technologies and think about the diversity there is in older people, in different groups of older people, and the different needs they have.

In Moldova, we have seen for us the impact -- the positive impact -- of intergenerational programmes pay off. We have seen how our work with UNFPA during COVID has really seen an increase in uptake in an understanding of technology. We've seen work in HelpAge India with senior citizens clubs and self-help groups engaging the youth, engaging members of different generations, and having a positive development, not just for the understanding of technology for older people, but also for the relationships and understanding within those in communities.

As I mentioned earlier, the inclusion of telehealth and telecare into universal health services, coupled with community health staff and volunteers, is being trained further on some of the challenges is essential. Those lessons that we've learned about engaging older people in research, in data, in design, in the evaluation of digital tools for tech is essential. Training healthcare staff and community workers on ageism, and taking an intergenerational approach that focuses on inclusive communities is a necessity. Without investment in age-friendly policies that are inclusive of older people, that tackle ageism, the digital divide will just further increase inequality over the coming decades.

Thank you.

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed.

Well, we've heard a variety of opinions expressed here. We have heard very much that there are, as Justin mentioned, common barriers to literacy, digital literacy, accessibility languages, and access to technology, and that older people, actually self-ageism and ageism within the communities and poor design due to the lack of engagement with older people, they need to be really involved in the process. Otherwise, they really won't adopt them. Jane mentioned about the better understanding the impact of technology, capacity building, but primarily I think so the message that came through from her was the need for data, the lack of age-disaggregated data means no policy, equals no investment, and that technology is a transformational driver, and we do need equity and access.

Minister Ursula Owusu-Ekuful said we need to utilize the tools that we are using all sorts of initiatives, including a Ghana card initiative, a value-added, which was value-added, integrating data; simplifying and identifying pensioners. It was a sort of one-stop shop, really, for all transactions and enabling them to get their pensions and their health insurance, et cetera. I think that that's important. We need to simplify things as much as possible.

My Linh told us and reminded us of how if we have been talking about QR code scanning a little while ago, we probably would have raised our eyebrows and said oh, we are not going to do that, but of course, we've all got totally used to it, and also discussing our vaccine status, et cetera. And talked very personally about her ageing parents, which I very much relate to, and tracking their osteoporosis and diabetes and not having to travel miles to get an assessment. And also about access to -- you know, access and removing barriers and that tech can help patients.

And I think, I mean, say we've heard a fair amount here, as well, obviously, from Zsuzsanna here. We heard about multiple global challenges, the pandemics, climate change, war, inequality, that countries are falling behind on their Sustainable Development Goals, and that for universal health coverage, we are actually going very, very slowly indeed, at one-fourth of the pace needed today meet health-related Sustainable Development Goals. She also mentioned about digital technologies being used by countries during the COVID-19 pandemic to close the care gap. And since older people were shielded at home and identified as vulnerable to severe outcomes, digital technologies were deployed to help deliver care and to mitigate social isolation.

So one thing that struck me was she said universal health coverage for older people is an affordable dream, and I think we need to think about that very carefully, that it can be accelerated with the support of digital innovation, even for low resource settings. But political commitment is required to make it a reality.

So I would like to thank you all for some great perceptions and perspectives on this very important topic. Apologies to the interpreters for speaking so quickly on those. But before I wrap

up, I would like to give the floor to the ITU Secretary-General, Mr. Hue zin Zhao, who will give us some closing remarks. Thank you very much, Mr. Zhao.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: Thank you very much, Max.

Dear colleagues, friends, I found this panel is very good, discussions, but I think this is also the right moment we all come together to review the situation of our society, what we have done so far with aged people and what challenges we might have and what kind of future we would like to see.

So this is really an excellent panel, and particularly, those mentioned, Justin's statistics give us a lot of good indications where we are. For example, those figures like Justin mentioned that in India, less than 4% of older people use ICT. And also another statistic showed that -- from Justin -- that the older ladies or older age use ICTs 20% less than the men use them. So these kind of things are really very, very alarming to us and also very good for us to see what we can do and what we should do.

And of course, you know, Justin also mentioned that we need a lot of apps, but then we found that older people may not like to use apps. So these kind of things, how can we help them to increase their skills, the use of these apps, so this is also something we need to do. And of course, My Linh Kha, from a company point of view, from a patient point of view, gave us a lot of advice, how can we work together to improve the situation? And of course, Jane mentioned investment to this business is also alarming. And because up to now, we have not guaranteed any sufficient budget, important budget, to do this kind of business. We have to work together to mobilize resources.

And I discussed this morning that I found our industries are quite interested to work in this field, and they like to provide a lot of solutions, applications to help our older people. So there is also potential of the benefits for them, for business for them, so that there are a lot of opportunities. I think that today's discussion really gave us very good opportunities to understand this. Of course, also Zsuzsanna from WHO gave us a lot of useful information what WHO has done, because they are the competent agency to take care of health for all ages, and now we are concentrating on the aged people, and she gave us a lot of useful information.

And Ursula from Ghana kindly joined us from beginning to now, and she gave us information about what the government, at least her government, is doing for this. This is very good.

So anyhow, that marks our competent moderator to give you some kind of summary. I don't need to repeat that information. And let me just say a few words to close this panel discussion.

So once again, thank you all very much for sharing this day and your experiences with us. My special thanks to our panelists and all participants here in Geneva and online.

As we heard today, people of all ages have a huge contribution to make to society, provided they are given access to digital technologies.

Now, here, I also heard over this discussion three key words: Applicable, affordable, and equitable. So these kind of words I think we should not forget.

So how we can use these technologies, and I think that to help people feel safe when they go online.

So let's remember that close to 3 billion people worldwide are still offline. Often living in poor areas or ones that are difficult to reach. The UN Secretary-General has called us to spare no efforts in bringing everybody everywhere online by 2030. Now it's May 2022, to bring these unconnected online by 2030 is -- last week I talked in Vienna, we were talking about this one because I was challenged by people at IT telecom. So Secretary-General, you talked about not leave anybody behind? It's wonderful. Can you please tell me by when? It's difficult for me to answer. Of course, I am not really to answer that by which year. But then they ask me, at a press conference, how about 2030? That is UN's goal to reach sustainable development. 2030, seems to be reasonable, but I found it's not easy. Because to bring those unconnected, half population living in remote area, no profit for industry or investment. And we work so far, so hard to reach half the population connected, and then less than ten years, connect the other half of the population by 2030, that is challenging. So I said yes, let's try. Let's try. But the Secretary-General at the General Assembly of United Nations, 2020, he publicly called, I would like to invite everybody to work together to bring everybody connected by 2030 with affordable services. So I thought of you. Secretary-General, you called this. Let's try. But it's not easy. It's not easy.

So this is something that we do have to work hard, but when I talk to Member States, someone said that if we try to work together, everybody work together, maybe we can achieve this goal. I totally agree. If we work together, we try our best, we could achieve it. For example, you know, we are not talking about ICT for aged people. WHO works hard for aged people, and our NGOs, like IFA and like Justin, they all work very hard so if we all work together, I think that we will be able to.

So let's try our best. So connecting the unconnected is the challenge of our time. This is the very reason for this day and ITU's mission. ITU has been celebrating world telecommunication and Information Society since 1969 without interruption. For last 53 years, our members and partners have marked this anniversary and have used it to promote ICT technologies and services for all.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of this day and events organized at the national and international level. So thank you all for your support, dedication, and commitment. I wish all senior citizens a long, happy, and healthy life, empowered by the benefit of ICTs. I thank you very much.

(Applause)

>> MAXIMILLIAN JACOBSON-GONZALEZ: Thank you very much, indeed,

Mr. Zhao. Let me thank again all our distinguished speakers who have so eloquently put the spotlight on the need to together ensure that digital technologies are beneficial for older persons and healthy ageing. Having such diverse stakeholders speak today demonstrates why it was timely to highlight this theme this year. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends, this brings us to the close of our World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2022 celebration, and we invite you all to visit our dedicated website for additional insights and to join our call for action at www.itu.int/wtisd. And on behalf of the ITU, I would like to thank all of you for joining us today, both to those who joined us here in Geneva and those joining us remotely. And all that's left for me to do is to thank our interpreters, our captioners, our technical crew, content team, and everyone who has been working tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this event to you today. From me, Max Jacobson-Gonzalez, and the whole of ITU, I wish you an excellence World Telecommunication and Information Society Day and a great digital year ahead. Thank you.

>> HOULIN ZHAO: I just want to recognize several dignitaries today. Thank you. Appreciated. I also recommend Ambassador from Oman left earlier. Ambassador from Bulgaria left earlier. I don't know whether other Ambassadors left earlier. Any of you working close to these Ambassadors, please convey my sincere personal appreciation to them. That is my last message. Okay. Fine. But I heard that Ambassador of Mauritius is here, but I could not find her. Oh, she left? Okay. Good. So finally, I thank my two sisters, Zsuzsanna, and -- it is nice to have these two distinguished ladies at the podium together. Thank you very much.

This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law.
